Nordenhaug Lectures 2011

31 October – 2 November

International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, Czech Republic

Lecturer: Prof Dr Glen Stassen

Solid Ground:

Incarnational Discipleship and Recovery of a Historically Realistic Jesus

Monday and Tuesday 09.30 – 12.00

Wednesday 16.00 – 17.30

Dr Glen Stassen is a Christian Ethicist. He is a renowned academician amongst Baptists and the ecumenical community and recognised as one of the *Twentieth-Century Shapers of Baptist Social Ethics* (Mercer University Press, 2008). Stassen was a professor for twenty years at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, USA. He is currently the Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, and Research Professor at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague. His and David Gushee's book, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, was awarded Best Book of the Year in the Theology/Ethics category by Christianity Today in 2004. His life-long work has been on issues of 'Just Peacemaking', with careful reflection upon religious freedom and human rights. He is credited with proposing a new globally-recognised theory of just peacemaking, rooted in human dignity and human rights in dealing with matters of war and conflict as well as with the recovery of the origins of the contemporary concept of human rights in the works of early British Baptists. He has an impressive publishing record and so there is a harmony of concern for human rights, for justice and for peacemaking as an academic pursuit, along with personal engagement in issues of human rights, religious freedom and just peacemaking.

At the same time, IBTS will organise a research colloquium around the theme of Prof Stassen's lectures.

The Nordenhaug Memorial Lectures were established in memory of Dr Josef Nordenhaug, one-time President of the Baptist Theological Seminary, Rüschlikon (1950-1960) and former Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (1960-1969). Former lecturers have included David S Russell (UK), Jan Milič Lochmann (Switzerland), Jűrgen Moltmann (Germany), Humeleng Mosala (South Africa), Elizabeth Schűssler Fiorenza (Germany), I Howard Marshall (UK), Miroslav Volf (Croatia), Nancey C Murphy (USA), Michael H Taylor (UK), Molly T Marshall (USA) and Paul Fiddes (United Kingdom).

For more information about the lectures (including a detailed summary), the colloquium (including presenting a paper), or to book accommodation, please contact Parushev@ibts.eu

Journal of European Baptist Studies

Contents

Editorial

The founders of this periodical envisioned that it would attract contributions from a variety of Christian backgrounds and perspectives of engaging in matters theological. Essays in this issue are an assorted collection of contributions from distinct Christian traditions presenting reflections on different aspects of the theological task.

Gill Dueck is a Canadian Mennonite scholar who takes us on an interesting and illuminating journey into the conceptualisation of the formation of the modern self. Beginning his reflections from key philosophical and theological writings on this subject since Plato, Dueck suggests that western civilisation developed a unique conception of the self that, even unarticulated, presents formidable challenges to the task of Christian discipleship.

Using a wide range of sources, two Orthodox church-historians, Ventzislav Karavaltchev and Pavel Pavlov, present a fresh understanding of the function of the Millet System in the Ottoman Empire, with far reaching consequences for the future self-understanding and organic development of modern Turkey and of the sisterhood of Orthodox communities emerging after the downfall of the Empire. They argue that, while not compatible or comparable with modern notions of justice, toleration or human rights, the Millet System provided the ruling class of the Ottoman Empire with a socio-political structure of relatively peaceful multi-religious coexistence in the poly-ethnic and multi-cultural realities of the Empire, which was far better than what existed elsewhere at that time.

In his essay, the biblical scholar Dr Theodor Stoychev, offers his perspective on the complex relationship of the themes of grace and law in Pauline writings. He is critical of the reductive attempts to address this complexity by using exclusively sources outside scripture or by limiting the debate to the text of scripture alone. Taking a lead from the patristic insights of the Orthodox tradition, he argues for a Christological and ecclesiastical reading of Paul's arguments. For him the person of the Lord is the hermeneutical key to the scriptures as a whole and the only way to come to terms with the theology of the apostle Paul who emphasises Christ instead of the Law.

The Revd Doc Dr Parush R Parushev, Academic Dean, IBTS

Inwardness, Authenticity and Therapy
Charles Taylor, the Modern Self and the Implications for Modern Discipleship

Gil Dueck

'I find my own self hard to grasp. I have become for myself a soil which is a cause of difficulty and much sweat.'

Augustine, *Confessions* X.xvi.

Introduction

Supply, Demand and Spiritual Tinkering

Influential Canadian sociologist of religion, Reginald Bibby, in his recent diagnosis of Canada's spiritual pulse, paints a simultaneously encouraging and depressing picture.[1] On the one hand he highlights evidence that contradicts the much-debated 'secularisation thesis',[2] and emphasises that, contrary to popular opinion, religion has a potentially bright future in twenty-first century Canadian life. On the other hand, the *place* that Bibby envisions for religion is one that may not excite all to the same degree. Consider the following statement: 'All is well on the demand side. It's the supply side that poses the problem. The belief systems and programmes offered by churches and other religious groups are simply not connecting with the people who need them or think they might need them at some point in the future.'[3]

Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow makes similar observations as he examines 'twenty- and thirty-somethings' in contemporary American life. He observes the pervasive reality of what he calls 'spiritual tinkering', that is, the eclectic 'pick and mix' approach to spirituality that is based on the desires and interests of the sovereign individual. In this context 'it becomes possible but also necessary to cobble together one's faith from the options at hand. There may be many suitable congregations to attend. For many young adults, there are also options for combining teachings from different religions and for selecting innovative ways in which to express

---

[1] Reginald W. Bibby, *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Novalis, 2004).

[2] Peter Berger is among the more influential figures associated with the secularisation thesis, though he has more recently done a remarkable about-face on his earlier claims. See *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 127-153 and *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Eerdmans, 1999). See also Rodney Stark, 'Secularization, R.I.P.' *Sociology of Religion*, 60 no. 3 (1999), pp. 249-273.

[3] Bibby, *Restless Gods*, p. 225.

one's spiritual interests.'[4] Wuthnow goes on to express a concern about 'free-riders' who want the security and comfort of belief in God without investing anything in organised religion but, as with Bibby, the consistent priority seems to be on how religious groups can address themselves to the needs and desires expressed by the religious consumer.[5]

The Discipleship Gap

Admittedly, Bibby and Wuthnow are sociologists and are necessarily prioritising description over prescription. Yet I am interested in what seems notably *absent* in their assessments, namely any reference to *discipleship,* that uniquely Christian notion of a life expended and ultimately transformed through following the example and teaching of Jesus Christ. Dallas Willard, in an eloquent apologetic for the necessity of Christian discipleship in the contemporary West, laments a church that 'has not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian', and makes the strong claim that 'the greatest issue facing the world today... is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as "Christians" will become *disciples* – students, apprentices, practitioners – *of Jesus Christ*, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.'[6]

        Of course there are numerous contributing factors to the 'discipleship gap' that Willard describes. And it goes without saying that the various historical currents that have flown into the present 'river' of Western social and religious life are highly complex and deeply intertwined. What I propose to do below is follow one significant tributary and examine its contribution to the unique challenges and opportunities for discipleship in the contemporary West.[7] That tributary is our unique conception of the self, particularly the notions of inwardness, individualism and authenticity that have become so entrenched within Western consciousness.

Charles Taylor and the story of the Modern Self

It is impossible to ask the questions around discipleship in the aftermath of modernity without understanding one of modernity's most interesting creations: a new and utterly unique picture of the human self. And when it

---

[4] Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 114.
[5] Ibid., p. 132.
[6] Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teaching on Discipleship* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 4, xv.
[7] I recognise that 'the West' is a very broad term and that serious risks of generalisation and oversimplification come with its use. Yet I remain convinced that it does describe something of a common historical and cultural heritage and thus remains useful for describing our current context.

comes to the story of this modern self, there is no more authoritative narrator than Canadian philosopher and historian Charles Taylor. Taylor's most significant contribution in this area is his imposing *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, a book that left reviewers struggling for words that would adequately describe both its scope and its depth. Perhaps Gilbert Meilaender put it most succinctly (even if lacking in proper academic circumspection) when he said, 'To describe *Sources of the Self* as a learned book would be a little like describing Michael Jordan as a skilled basketball player: accurate, but hardly adequate to the phenomenon.'[8]

While Taylor's project is far too vast to summarise in adequate detail, of central significance for my purposes is his use of 'inwardness' as a key descriptor of the orientation of the modern self. Taylor describes this emergent inwardness by narrating a history of philosophical and theological conceptions of the self with a few key thinkers serving as tour guides. Taylor's goal throughout is to point out key historical innovations and departures while simultaneously creating a composite portrait of an identifiably 'modern' self. What follows, then, will be a brief survey of what Taylor considers to be some of the key aspects of modern identity.

Plato and Self-Collection

Taylor begins with Plato and shows how he can be viewed as the hinge on which the ethic of the warrior citizen, an ethic of 'action and glory' transitions to the ethic of the philosopher with its priority on 'reason and reflection'.[9] Alasdair MacIntyre has similarly contrasted the 'virtues of heroic societies' with the 'virtues of Athens'.[10] Previously the possibility of the 'higher life' had depended on an infusion of power from the gods. Traits such as strength, courage, and the thirst to 'rise above' the limitations of existence were prized and the battlefield was the theatre in which they were celebrated. MacIntyre describes these 'heroic societies' as having tightly prescribed (even fated) roles where identity is fused with the performance of expected actions.[11] Merit and glory are distributed across close bonds of kinship and under the canopy of an inexorable fate. Life in this kind of world is 'aimed at fame and glory, and the immortality one enjoys when one's name is for ever on men's lips'.[12]

---

[8] Gilbert Meilaender, Review of *Sources of the Self*, by Charles Taylor, *First Things* no 5 (Ag-S 1990), p. 63.

[9] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 117.

[10] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (The University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

[11] Ibid., p. 122.

[12] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 117.

So Plato's idea of 'self-collection' is a significant and, in Taylor's view, incompatible alternative to this warrior ethic. In the place of strength and courage Plato prioritised self-mastery in the face of the corruptions and distractions of the life of the senses. We become 'good' not through the quest for glory and immortality but when we give ourselves to be ruled by reason. For Plato, the root of chaos was to be found in human desire and the persistent distractions of material existence. 'Salvation' was to be found in ordering of the self toward the truth as depicted in Plato's famous allegory of the Cave with its prisoners gradually turning to face the light. In Taylor's words, 'Making...people wise is a matter of turning the soul's gaze from the darkness to the brightness of true being.'[13] The language of 'inwardness' would likely have seemed foreign to Plato but his conception of the higher life depended upon the self reflecting upon its own internal orientation. This conception, according to Taylor, set the stage for significant later developments.

Augustine's Inner Light

According to Taylor, the great bishop Augustine of Hippo represents the next step along the journey toward the modern self. Taylor observes in Augustine a basically Platonic metaphysic, with 'things below' finding their ultimate *telos* through correspondence with 'things above'. Like Plato, Augustine understood the universe as a material manifestation of a divine order, a 'sign' that ultimately pointed away from itself and toward the true reality which, in Augustine's mind, was the thoughts or ideas of God himself.[14] For example, in the *Confessions* Augustine grieves the death of an unnamed friend and muses on the fleeting nature of the pleasures of life. 'For wherever the human soul turns itself, other than to you, it is fixed in sorrows, even if it is fixed upon beautiful things external to you and external to itself, which would nevertheless be nothing if they did not have their being from you.'[15] Here is a picture of the soul that can be 'steered' or turned toward things external to both God and the self, but things that are nevertheless dependent upon God for their very existence.

Plato and Augustine share the conviction that the primary danger human beings face in their quest for union with what is ultimately true is their tendency to be distracted by the pleasures and cares of material existence. In Augustine's case, this is most obvious in his ongoing self-abasement over the sexual sins of his youth. Where Augustine departs from Plato is in his conception of God as not only the ultimate external Truth to

---

[13] Ibid., p. 123.
[14] Ibid., p. 128.
[15] Augustine, *Confessions*, 4.10.

which our souls need to be oriented but also as the inner *ground* of our capacities of thought and perception. 'God is not just what we long to see, but what powers the eye which sees. So the light of God is not only "out there" illuminating the order of being, it is also an "inner light".'[16] So later in the *Confessions*, Augustine can say 'the soul needs to be enlightened by light from outside itself so that it can participate in the truth',[17] yet still conceive of the journey toward that light as a journey into 'my innermost citadel', a term he uses to describe the soul. What has changed for Augustine is the fact that he now has a guide on the inward journey because God has become his helper.[18] Yet, from this point onward the journey *upward* to the higher life (and to God himself) will necessarily be a journey *inward* as well.

Descartes and the Constructive Power of Reason

Finally, Taylor sees in the work of Descartes the crucial departure from the inwardness of Augustine. Both Plato and Augustine had been united in their view that human life depended on external 'moral sources'. Put differently, it was the responsibility of the human being to conform his/her life to an order that was ontologically basic. Human reason functioned within that overarching metaphysic; its purpose was to contemplate on the rational order of the cosmos in order to properly align the human soul (not to mention the *polis* or the 'City of God') with that reality. With Descartes we finally see this view challenged and ultimately abandoned as his search for a secure foundation for knowledge led in a decidedly new direction, namely, to the inner workings of the human mind.

The world, for Descartes, was not to be understood teleologically but mechanistically. We no longer find ourselves in an arena where meaning is to be *found*. Rather, we inhabit a 'disenchanted'[19] world where the assumption that the phenomena that we encounter are imbued with an essential meaning or purpose can no longer be sustained. Ours is 'a mechanistic universe of matter which is most emphatically not a medium of thought or meaning, [a universe] which is expressively dead'.[20] The causes of this disenchantment are too numerous to fairly summarise but

---

[16] Ibid., p. 129.

[17] Augustine, *Confessions*, IV.xv.

[18] Ibid., VII.x.

[19] Taylor describes his understanding of 'disenchantment', a term that he traces back to Weber, as the belief in 'the disappearance of a world [of spirits, demons and moral forces], and the substitution of what we live today: a world in which the only locus of thoughts, feelings, spiritual élan is what we call minds; the only minds in the cosmos are those of human beings; and minds are bounded, so that those thoughts, feelings, etc., are situated "within" them.' See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of the University of Harvard, 2007), pp. 29-30.

[20] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 148.

undoubtedly the success of an incipient science in offering naturalistic explanation of phenomena that had hitherto either defied explanation or depended upon a supernatural one, is of crucial significance.

Of course, human reason functions differently within a disenchanted world. Since there is no assumed 'ontic *logos*' to discover, the human mind is given the responsibility of constructing or manufacturing whatever order is deemed necessary or satisfactory by the thinking subject. This is the critical distinction that Taylor observes between Augustine and Descartes. 'The Cartesian option is to see rationality, or the power of thought, as a capacity we have to *construct* orders which meet the standards demanded by knowledge, or understanding or certainty.'[21] It is precisely this distinction that begins the constitution of a uniquely *modern* self. A profound shift has taken place: 'The judgment now turns on properties of the activity of thinking rather than on the substantive beliefs which emerge from it.'[22] This sets the stage, for a view of the self is 1) radically free in that the individual is no longer obligated to search for an existing 'form' to which it is expected to conform, and 2) radically fluid in that any *telos* or identity that is constructed is inherently fragile as the individual encounters ideas or experiences that do not reinforce it.

In his more recent work Taylor has described the difference between the 'porous self' of the pre-modern world and the 'buffered self' of the modern world. The porous self was 'open' to the variety of spirits, demons and other moral forces that were believed to be operating in an 'enchanted' cosmos.[23] Crucially, meaning existed in agents that were external to the human mind but the boundary between the self and the external was 'porous'. The 'buffered self' is the self that has 'disengaged' from everything outside of the human mind and explains phenomena by looking within the human mind for their explanation. In Taylor's words, '(t)he self can see itself as invulnerable, as master of the meanings of things for it'.[24] There is now a 'buffer' between the interior self and a world which is increasingly seen as disenchanted and dysteological. The end result is that the self is set free (or cast adrift) into a world in which previously stable meanings are radically destabilised.

The picture of inwardness that emerges through Taylor's narration illuminates numerous important features of contemporary experience. This picture depends upon the primal 'inward turn' that we see in Plato's rejection of the virtues of the heroic society. It is given theological

---

[21] Ibid., p. 148.
[22] Ibid., p. 156.
[23] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 33, 38.
[24] Ibid., p. 38.

justification in Augustine's fusion of a Platonic worldview with Christian ideas of original sin and divine revelation. The uniquely modern predicament is that of a self which is spatially conceived as 'inward' but cut loose from these philosophical and theological moorings to which it was originally attached. This is what postmodern thinkers have called the 'disappearing self', a self that is gifted with the freedom of rational autonomy and the power to construct itself but condemned to the crisis of confidence that arises once the sources of that self have been exposed.

Individualism: The Manifestation of the Individual Self

Having briefly sketched an outline of Taylor's genealogy of the inwardness of the modern self we are now in a position to examine some of its more salient social features. And while, the term 'individualism' is undoubtedly prone to a certain vacuity, it remains a useful doorway through which to enter a consideration of the implications of a cultural consensus around the inwardness of the self. Clearly more precision is needed in articulating the significance of this term and to that end it will be useful to consider the contribution of Robert Bellah. Bellah and his research team,[25] in their highly influential *Habits of the Heart*, have added significantly to our understanding of how individualism expresses itself in the actual actions and assumptions of American[26] people. While Bellah's research is now nearly twenty-five years old, it is something of a landmark in that it represents an 'awakening' to the religious and social implications of the individualist orientation that had, already by that point, become something of a default position. To be more direct: I am suggesting a link between the inward orientation that Taylor describes and the individualism that Bellah observed at the level of everyday American cultural and social life.

A Narrative of Emancipation

Central to the assumed individualism that lies at the heart of much of Western life is a narrative of emancipation. No longer are we bound to prescribed roles assigned to us by either tradition or what Taylor calls 'older moral horizons'.[27] And it is this progressive discovery that is central

---

[25] Due to the awkwardness of persistently referring to each of the five authors responsible for this book I will use Bellah's name to stand for them all.

[26] The term 'American' is undoubtedly too broad here. Bellah is quite transparent about the fact that his survey is restricted primarily to middle-class (white) Americans. His belief is that it is among the middle classes that we see the dominant support for the institutions of free and democratic societies as well as the most clear evidence for the aspirations that sustain that support. See R. Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. viii.

[27] Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, ON: The House of Anansi Press, 1991), p. 3.

in the modern story of the self. Regent College cultural observer and historian Craig Gay writes,

> Western individuality has been and continues to be experienced as a great *liberation*. The modern individual has been freed from the repressive constraints of tradition, of caste and clan, and indeed even from the limitations of nature itself. We are free now to make something of ourselves if we can, to better our position in the social order, and/or simply to be left alone, and we are protected by laws and institutions which guarantee our rights over and against the larger society.[28]

While this has justifiably been seen by many as a positive development – a liberation from an outdated anthropology and an obsolete theology – Taylor also observes a heavy cost at the level of our 'cosmic' horizons. By this Taylor means that as our field of vision has shifted from the transcendent to the immanent, we have lost a sense of overarching purpose for our lives. This has led to a shrinking of our field of concern, a 'narrowing [of] our lives, [making] them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others or society'.[29] And these are precisely the observations that Bellah made in *Habits of the Heart*. As he questioned Americans on their cultural, social and religious values, Bellah observed two common narratives that lie at the heart of the American conception of the self.

Utilitarian Individualism

The first of these is what Bellah calls 'utilitarian individualism'. This strand goes back to the centrality of freedom that infuses the Enlightenment project as a whole and the American experience in particular. The American experiment was predicated on a longing for freedom – political freedom from the perceived tyrannies of the British crown and, as importantly, religious freedom from the Anglican Church. This freedom, initially conceived primarily in terms of what it was *from*, eventually became equally clear regarding what it was *for*. The goal became for the individual to have the freedom to vigorously pursue his own (usually material) self-interest. In this sense freedom serves a 'utilitarian' purpose – it is a necessary means toward the end of individual self-improvement. Bellah observes that, 'The rational, self-interested individual had emerged as Economic Man and, as such, was conceived as living most naturally in the conditions of a competitive market in which trade and exchange would replace ranks and loyalties as the coordinating mechanism of social life.'[30]

---

[28] Craig Gay, *The Way of the (Modern) World or Why it's Tempting to Live as if God Doesn't Exist* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 191.
[29] Ibid., p. 4.
[30] Bellah, *Habits*, pp. 35, 36.

It is important to recognise just how radically different the 'conditions of a competitive market' are from the more traditional notions of social order. The individual is no longer seen as part of a larger whole to which he is somehow bound and obligated. Rather, the individual is now the fundamental reality, pursuing his/her private agenda on a neutral stage that serves no other purpose than the enabling of that pursuit. To be sure, it is not as if there was *no* concern for the common social good in the early stages of the American experiment. Bellah observes that, 'by the end of the eighteenth century, there would be those who would argue that in a society where each vigorously pursued his own interest, the social good would automatically emerge.'[31] The crucial inversion is now obvious. No longer would individual fulfilment (if such a word can be applied historically) be discovered as the common social order was strengthened. Instead, common goods would be incidental (and perhaps accidental) consequences of the 'unseen hand' of the competitive marketplace.

Expressive Individualism

Of course this utilitarian approach did not satisfy everyone. Much like the Romantic revolt against the aridity of Enlightenment rationalism, there were many during this period who found a life devoted to material self-interest stultifying. Bellah describes a growing protest against a vision of human life that 'seemed to leave too little room for love, human feeling, and a deeper expression of the self.'[32] At the heart of Bellah's definition of expressive individualism is the conviction that there is something unique within each of us – a feeling, perhaps an intuition or spark of creativity – that we have a duty or obligation to express. It is a protest against a reductionist vision of human life that centres around economic production and security but it still locates the moral sources that *define* the self *within* the self. N.T. Wright, the respected New Testament scholar, theologian, and bishop, in a recent work calling for the rediscovery of character-based ethics, captures well the popular contemporary expression of this kind of individualism. 'Be yourself; don't let anyone else dictate to you; don't let other people's systems or phobias cramp your style; be honest about what you're really feeling and desiring. Get in touch with the bits of yourself you've been screening out; make friends with them and be true to them. Anything else will result in a diminishing of your true, unique and wonderful self.'[33] According to Wright, what is now widely assumed is that we are under an imperative to actualise something *from within* in order to achieve authenticity. The fact that Wright can observe these features of

---

[31] Ibid., p. 33.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

what Bellah would call 'expressive individualism' some twenty-five years after *Habits of the Heart* was published indicates just how 'habitual' these patterns of thinking have actually become.

In sum, both the utilitarian individualist seeking greater material freedom and the expressive individualist longing for a fuller and more aesthetically satisfying vision of life have accepted the basic terms upon which the self is now negotiated. Both now look *inside* the self for the resources upon which to ground their form of life and, crucially, both assume the independence of the individual from outside constraints. How to articulate a common vision of social life given these radical assumptions is the topic to which we now turn.

Authenticity, Therapy and the Modern Self

So the question is: to whom or what is loyalty owed when the self is cast in such radically individualistic terms? The answer, simply put, is that loyalty is owed precisely *to* the emancipated self and that this loyalty functions as a cultural imperative that, in Bellah's striking phrase, 'binds us together in solitude'.[34] But serious questions have been, and are being asked about the broader social and religious implications of the emancipation of the self. This final section will explore some of the ways in which the 'river' of the modern self may be threatening to overflow its banks.

Values: The New Ethical Vocabulary

When it comes to expressing the loyalty to the self or articulating the precise moral content that informs our action, the word that most of us reach for is *values* – namely, the preferences or choices that are *valued* by those who happen to have chosen them. In *The Malaise of Modernity* Taylor puts it this way, 'Everyone has a right to develop their own form of life, grounded on their own sense of what is really important or of value. People are called upon to be true to themselves and to seek their own self-fulfillment. What this consists of, each must, in the last instance, determine for him or herself.'[35] Of course the novelty of this notion of 'values' is in the fact that it is self-referential – that is, it offers no foundation other than the will of the individual. 'One's own idiosyncratic preferences are their own justification, because they define the true self.'[36] While this may raise obvious questions for some, it appears to be an inconsistency that many

---

[34] Bellah, *Habits*, p. 62.
[35] Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, p. 14.
[36] Bellah, *Habits*, p. 75.

others are prepared to live with because of their deeply held (even if unarticulated) convictions regarding the loyalty that their 'selves' are owed.

These convictions are expressed well by a certain Margaret Oldham, one of Bellah's interviewees. In response to a question on the meaning of life, Oldham responded, 'What I think the universe wants from me is to take my values, whatever they might happen to be, and live up to them as much as I can. If I'm the best person I know how to be according to my lights, then something good will happen. I think in a lot of ways living that kind of life is its own reward in and of itself.'[37] Here we see an apparent contradiction: Oldham begins with a vague notion of a personal universe and moves effortlessly into the language of personal values and the obligation to live up to them 'whatever they might be'. It seems obvious that what is central to Oldham is living according to her own 'lights' even as she gives a nod to the difficulty of grounding those lights in nothing more than the subjective preferences of the self. What is crucial to note is not the specific *content* of whatever values people choose but rather the new moral *vision* that is operational (again, even if unarticulated) behind the decision-making processes of our individual and social worlds.

Authenticity: The New Ethical Ideal

Like older moral visions, there are 'goods' to be pursued and perceived dangers to be avoided; there are pictures of the good life that are imagined and threats to its attainment that are to be rigorously opposed. British historian Meic Pearse says it well, 'All societies set some particular value at a premium and, in doing so, produce its opposite as an inevitable by-product. The value that is put at a premium by a culture will be that which is most necessary to sustain it, that which holds at bay its deepest fear and gravest danger.'[38] Pearse goes on to observe two key historical shifts that have contributed to the cultural consensus that now exists around the ethic of authenticity. It is Pearse's conviction that it is precisely this notion of authenticity that makes the 'West' nearly incomprehensible within a global context and among people who do not share its cultural heritage (and in this way emphasises the novelty of our assumptions regarding the self).

He traces the first shift back to the Reformation and describes it as a shift from 'fending off chaos to integrity'. By this he means that the rigidity of the social world prior to the Reformation was designed primarily to 'hold at bay' the chaos of anarchy that was always lurking close by in the precarious economic and social context of medieval European feudalism.

---

[37] Ibid., pp. 14,15.
[38] Meic Pearse, *Why The Rest Hates the West: Understanding the Roots of Global Rage* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 61.

Luther's anguish, and eventual triumph, over his inability to conform his inner motivations to his outward behaviour eventually produced a deeply held cultural conviction regarding the necessity of integrity between 'who we are' and 'what we do'. Luther's famous appeal to personal conscience in the face of imperial opposition at the Diet of Worms might strike many as the triumph of the authentic individual, but this is an anachronistic reading of the history. Esteemed church historian Kenneth Latourette carefully distinguishes Luther's 'individualism' from a humanist stream with which it is often equated.

> Here was what on the surface resembled the individualism of the contemporary humanists and that individualism which was to be a growing feature of Western civilization in the following centuries. However, unlike much of the latter, it was not selfish and irresponsible. It arose from a deep sense of divine compulsion... the individualism which was not conscious of any such urge, which did not acknowledge responsibility, and which proved a disintegrating menace, probably arose in part from a distortion of the conception represented by Luther.[39]

The second shift Pearse observes is from 'integrity to being true to oneself'. Through the Enlightenment's corrosion of the plausibility of traditional authorities, Luther's idea of integrity 'slowly ceased to mean primarily a conformity of the inward person to an outward morality; instead it has come to mean a congruity between the inner and outer person regardless of the actual content of that individual's beliefs, morals or ideals.'[40] The individual self, unique and unspeakably precious, is threatened by pressures of conformity and expectation. This self must struggle to remain 'true' in the face of *this* kind of opposition. Authenticity has replaced integrity. Taylor suggests that this is a radically new moral 'idea', one that 'accords crucial moral importance to a new kind of contact with myself, with my own inner nature, which it sees as in danger of being lost... through the pressures of outward conformity... And then it greatly increases the importance of this self-contact by introducing the principle of originality: each of our voices has something of its own to say.'[41] It is this possibility of 'contact' with something inside of the individual that forms the basis of the ethic of authenticity.

---

[39] Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity,* vol 2, *Reformation to the Present* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975), pp. 717-718.
[40] Ibid., p. 57.
[41] Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, p. 29.

Therapy: The New Function of Religion

One of the key consequences of the uniquely modern understanding of the self has to do with the way in which it has forced a reconsideration regarding the very function of religion. Craig Gay has named this reconsideration the 'therapeutic orientation'. Gay's interest, seen especially in his influential work, *The Way of the (Modern) World*, is in how a certain kind of 'practical atheism' has infused the thoughts, practices and even the central institutions of modern life. So, according to Gay, modern life renders God's agency and activity in the world highly implausible and very easy to ignore. Gay is approaching the modern question from a different angle than both Taylor and Bellah but it seems to me that his analysis is very incisive regarding the religious implications of the inward (and subsequently *individualistic*) orientation that have already been described. If Taylor describes the genealogy of the modern self and if Bellah observes its more recent cultural manifestations, then Gay's key contribution is in articulating the way in which the religious question has been, and continues to be renegotiated in light of these earlier trends.

Gay employs the term 'therapy' in a very precise way, one that has its roots in the earlier work of Phillip Rieff.[42] While this term calls to mind the specific treatment of particular physical or emotional maladies, Gay sees it as an orientation toward life in which nearly every aspect of human experience – from relationships to employment to consumption, even to religion – is evaluated according to the criterion of the 'subjective experience of well-being'.[43] The suggestion is that in a world in which the self's orientation is primarily 'inward', and where moral teleology has been replaced with an ethic of authenticity, 'therapy' is the only remaining function for religious belief to perform. In this Gay echoes Christopher Lasch's earlier observation that 'people... hunger not for personal salvation let alone for the restoration of an earlier golden age, but for the feeling, the momentary illusion, of personal well-being, health and psychic security'.[44] This is an inhospitable world for moral traditions which advocate the disciplined pursuit of an agreed upon *telos*. When considering, for example, the question of Christian discipleship, it becomes increasingly difficult to articulate the *cost* of following Jesus on the path to true humanness.

Clearly this is not to suggest that a 'culture of therapy' is overtly hostile toward religion. Rather, Gay's critical observations centre around the specific *place* that religion is afforded in a culture where therapy is the unconscious paradigm. Gay borrows Rieff's notion of the quintessentially

---

[42] Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).
[43] Gay, *The Way of the (Modern) World*, p. 186.
[44] Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Warner Books, 1979), p. 33.

modern 'psychological man' who is preoccupied with well-being to the extent that, while 'God-language' is still permissible, and even widely *used,* it can only be employed in the service of therapy.[45] This is a uniquely *modern* problem because 'psychological man' lives in a cosmos which has had its metaphysical or theological horizons erased and is left with nothing but the immanence of immediate experience. And because the pursuit of well-being takes place in a context of omnipresent pluralism, it is increasingly difficult to see religion as having *any* function beyond the level of therapy. Gay worries that the long term effect of this type of orientation will undermine religion through an undetected 'trivialising' of its central concerns. 'The pluralistic environment', Gay argues, 'is one in which questions about the nature of the good, the meaning of truth, the existence of God, etc., may understandably be taken to be unanswerable and hence in a certain sense insignificant.'[46] So 'God-language', though still admissible, is now one more 'planet' orbiting around the 'sun' of the therapeutic needs of the self. The notion of 'competition' between rival traditions is seen as a quaint relic of a more credulous age; instead, each view must demonstrate its therapeutic utility to the comfort-seeking self. Rieff summarises this shift well, saying, 'Our cultural revolution does not aim, like its predecessors, at victory for some rival commitment, but rather at a way of using all commitments, which amounts to loyalty toward none'.[47]

Influential sociologist of religion Peter Berger has called this condition 'homelessness', suggesting that 'the pluralistic structures of modern society have made the life of more and more individuals migratory, ever-changing, mobile'. Berger goes on to argue that this condition has had devastating consequences for religion because of the relentless and inexorable process of pluralisation that has resulted in nearly every sphere of life. 'Because of the religious crisis in modern society', he argues, 'social "homelessness" has become metaphysical – that is, it has become "homelessness" in the cosmos.'[48] Berger goes on to suggest that, while this privatisation has had some positive effects, on the whole it places far too much pressure on the individual who is forced to labour under the burden of privately constructing that which was once sustained at multiple cultural levels by a host of 'plausibility structures' that were external to the individual. Berger concludes that while modern individuals can meet with limited success in constructing 'homes' for themselves, 'over and over

---

[45] Ibid., p. 187.

[46] Gay, *The Way of the (Modern) World*, p. 187.

[47] Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, p. 21.

[48] Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), pp. 165, 166.

again, the cold winds of "homelessness" threaten these fragile constructions'.[49] Religious faith has found a therapeutic home, it seems, but that home is very precarious and increasingly vulnerable to collapse both from within and without.

Conclusion

It is commonplace to tell and retell narratives of crisis and decline regarding the state of Christianity in the modern (and now postmodern world). We are quite used to wringing our hands and lamenting the prospects for the church in a world that seems to be increasingly inhospitable to its message. We might do well to be reminded of the words of the esteemed Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski who, in his book *Modernity on Endless Trial*, writes,

> To be a Christian, therefore, is and always has been a difficult task, for Christianity demands the ability radically to expose our own evil to ourselves... In this sense there are not many Christians and never have been many. That there are few of them, however, is not a symptom of any 'crisis' of Christianity, but confirmation of something it says about itself: that is difficult to measure up to its demands. If there is a crisis, it is a permanent one; it is an indispensable way of being for Christianity, or perhaps an expression of the more general and universal crisis in which we all find ourselves, having been driven out of paradise.[50]

If Kolakowski is right then our current situation is not worthy of special alarm, at least no more alarm than would be produced by the ongoing recognition of our exile from Eden. Yet discipleship in every age has required not only knowledge of the dimensions of the narrow path of life but also an awareness of the wider paths that lead away from it.

So I have tried to suggest that there is a unique conception of the self that, though often unarticulated, offers significant challenges to the task of Christian discipleship. In the work of Charles Taylor we find a powerful narration of the philosophical and theological tributaries that have flowed into the river of the modern self. The central plotlines of that story are a growing emphasis on 'inwardness' alongside a loss of confidence in the ontology and teleology that had underwritten older conceptions of the self. This led into a discussion of the unique contours of modern individualism and particular how that individualism came to foster an ethic of authenticity where the self and its desires became the fixed point and 'therapy' became the overarching orientation toward questions of faith. Indeed, it may be

---

[49] Berger et al, *The Homeless Mind*, p. 168.
[50] Leszek Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 94.

that therapy is the only *possible* orientation given the assumptions regarding the self that have become so deeply entrenched into our habits of thought and social practices.

In this kind of a world the 'supply and demand' calculations with respect to the felt needs of religious consumers makes perfect sense. In this kind of world there is a certain logic to the practice of 'spiritual tinkering'. The challenge remains to speak of discipleship in ways that, while clearly articulating the benefits, remains rooted in Jesus' teaching that it is in giving away our lives that we truly find them and that in that dying to ourselves we are born again.

Gil Dueck is a doctoral student at IBTS who teaches at Bethany College, a Mennonite Brethren school in western Canada.

How Just was the Ottoman Millet System

Ventzislav Karavaltchev and Pavel Pavlov

At times the borders of the Ottoman Empire almost reached Vienna in the north, Yemen in the south, Algeria in the west and today's Iran in the east. The Ottoman state was a form of theocracy, based on strict notions of hierarchy and order, with the Sultan on the top exercising absolute, divine right at its pinnacle. To what extent the Ottoman elite believed that their sultan was the supreme ruler of the Islamic world, to whom all others were expected to defer, is still in need of further investigation and here we will not attempt to deal with this matter. But we have to admit that, according to Islam, governors and statesmen are simultaneously judges and supervisors. Their power can be executive, administrative and judicial, but not legislative. The Legislator (lawmaker) is Allah alone and he has already given his norms and rules for governing through the revelation of Muhammad. According to Islamic teaching the supreme governor and ruler is Allah himself, the people are his subjects, slaves. Allah is the only monadic source of power. In the Islamic 'umma' every Muslim is imperatively a believer. All of this leads to fusion of the religious and civil community and suspension of the political freedom of the individual on behalf of the state. That is why the state in Islam is the only real political subject, not the individual as in the Christian tradition. The institution of caliphate represents the legitimate Islamic state after the death of her creator.

At the same time, despite its enormous success, Arabic aristocracy could not keep infinite control over the entire 'umma', because Islam itself undermined such an Arabic superiority. All who adopt Islam become equal despite their ethnic origin or communal position. Islam widely opens the gate for all gifted and ambitious non-Arabs. With the adoption of Islam, Syrians, Persians, Turks, etc. became pillars of Islamic civilisation, and thus Islam and the caliphate political tradition became the base on which the Ottoman Empire built its society. It relied on balance and synthesis, a new society which was neither pure Muslim, nor Christian, for which the exact word is – Ottoman. For almost six hundred years, within the frontiers of the Ottoman Empire, three main religious groups: Christians, Jews and Muslims, lived alongside each other. None of these religious groups were ethnically pure; they were divided evenly among themselves into a variety of religious shades. The Ottoman system initially divided all these people into the domain of the faithful – the Muslims; and the domain of war – the non-Muslims. In Islamic religious law (sharia) and quite often in Ottoman official writings, it was customary to describe the world as being made up

of the Dar al Islam (the house of Islam) and the Dar al harb (the house of war). It is interesting that to the first category belonged not only the domains of the Ottoman sultans themselves, but also those of other Sunni Muslims, such as the Uzbek khans or the Moguls of India. At the same time, again in conformity with religious law, non-Muslim rulers who had accepted to pay tribute to the Ottoman sultan were considered part of the Islamic world. One such polity was Dubrovnik, a city-state that due to its size and location was able to avoid most of the conflicts in which the Empire was involved. Other dependencies of the Empire governed by non-Muslim rulers, and by virtue of this relationship part of the Islamic world, were the principalities of Moldavia, Transylvania, Walachia, etc.[1] The rights and obligations of each individual in the Ottoman Empire were determined by the position they had in one of these two groups – the group (house) of Islam and the group (house) of war. 'The Turks were by no means in the situation of a dominating majority opposed to oppressed minorities everywhere in the Empire. In many regions they themselves were in the position of minorities, at least in respect of their numbers.'[2]

The non-Muslim community was divided into millets, administrative units organised on the basis of religious affiliation rather than ethnic origin.[3] The duties of the subjects, organised in their millets, were to pay their taxes, to keep order and to observe their respective religious and cultural freedoms, under their own religious and lay leaders. The term 'millet' originally meant religion and religious community.[4] By the end of the seventeenth century, while still keeping its original meaning, it also began to denote such modern concepts as nation and nationality.[5]

The Qur'an and Islam recognised Jews and Christians as 'people of the Book' who worshipped the same God as Muslims. Islam partially penalised Jews and Christians for failing to accept God's most recent revelation through the prophet Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad himself was the one who established 'a binding precedent for his successors when dealing with non-Muslims through his agreement with the Jewish tribes of

---

[1] If we have to be precise, the case of Dubrovnik, Moldavia, Walachia, etc. should be associated with Dar al sulh (house of treaty). The term was coined by Muslim fuqaha (jurists) after many years of the advent of Islam with respect to the situation that prevailed in their contemporary world. Moreover, fuqaha coined different terms for different regions according to the situations prevailing therein like Dar al-aman (territory of security), dar al-silm (territory of peace) and dar al-muwadaah (territory of mutual peace) etc.

[2] H. Majer, 'The functioning of a Multi-ethnic and Multi-religious state: The Ottoman Empire', in: *Ислам, Балкан и Великие силе (XIX-XX вв.)* (Београд: Историйски институт, 1997), p. 61.

[3] The Ottoman administration used the term Millet basically for non-Muslims, although from time to time a reference to Muslim Millet does appear. For more details see: P. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman rule, 1354 - 1804* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), p. 44.

[4] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, t. VII (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1993), pp. 61-62. One of the most comprehensive studies on the problem of the Millet System is: N. Pentazopoulos, *Church and Law in the Balkan Peninsula during the Ottoman Rule* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1967).

[5] *Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 63.

Medina'.[6] During the time of the Muslim conquest, non-Muslim 'people of the Book' who inhabited a town or community hostile to Muslims, had to choose among three alternatives: to accept Islam, to accept a 'dhimmi' status of dependent tax-payers or to resist till the end and be destroyed or deprived of their rights and treated as pagans.

Following the pattern of Muhammad, later Muslim authorities continued to recognise the rights of believers in the monotheistic religions to remain at peace within the Muslim state, as long as they recognised Islam's political authority and paid their taxes.[7] Normally relations between Muslims and non-Muslims and between the Muslim state and non-Muslim subjects were based and regulated on the principles of Islamic law and tradition. Generally speaking, the concepts of the 'other' have long roots in history. The ancient Greeks divided the world into that of civilised Greeks and of barbarian others. Barbarians could be brave, courageous and even gentle, but they did not possess civilisation. For Jews, there are the goyim, rest of the world, the non-Jews, the other – whose lack of certain characteristics keeps them outside the chosen Jewish community. The same was for Muslims, for whom the notion of the 'dhimmi' became another way of talking about difference. In our case, Muslims regard Christians and Jews as 'the People of the Book' or 'dhimmi', who received God's revelation before Muhammad and therefore obtained a particular, but incomplete message. Thus, 'dhimmi' have religion, civilisation, and the message of God, but since they received only part of that message, they are inherently different from and inferior to Muslims.

So the Millet System was not an original Ottoman innovation and had its origins in the earlier states, both Muslim (Umayyad and Abassid) and non-Muslim (Persia and Byzantine). That is why the Ottoman Empire's general contribution to the Millet System was mainly to regulate and institutionalise it.[8] The system helped to create a 'tolerable' minority status for different religious groups. However, it also placed rigid restrictions on individual freedoms within each of the millets. This system not only allowed the state to control communities through religious institutions but also allowed religious hierarchies to control internal dissent and combat heterodoxy.[9] Sometimes, when the situation required, the Ottomans went beyond the protection stipulated by Islamic law and practice. For example, from the very beginning the Ottoman Empire adopted the policy of

---

[6] B. Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab world. The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 19.
[7] Ibid.
[8] See B. Brande and B. Lewis (eds.), Introduction, in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 1, (New York and London: Holmes and Meirs Publishers, 1982), pp. 1-34.
[9] H. Yavuz, *Islamic political identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 40.

recognition of the Orthodox Church as part of the Ottoman state. The leaders of the Church, the Patriarch, the Metropolitans and the Bishops were partly included into the Ottoman ruling class.[10]

At that time, one of the most noteworthy attributes of Ottoman rule was its toleration of the different religious beliefs, organised uniquely and justly through the Millet System. The Turkish conquerors tolerated the other two religions, at a time when toleration was very rare in Europe. Let us remember what the Christian Catholic crusaders did when they sacked Byzantium at the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth centuries. The Orthodox Church calendar is full of martyrs, clergy and lay men, victims of Catholic cruelty. No wonder that the Orthodox world considered Catholic Europe as bad or even worse than the Turks.

Ottoman tolerance was based mainly on cleverness and goodwill. To control a vast territory where the population was primarily Christian, to be tolerant and just was the only reasonable way for the Turks to behave. The purpose of the Millet System was to keep the subjects of the different religions, traditions and languages separated as much as possible so as to avoid religious conflicts and revolts against the sultan. Therefore, avoidance of non-Muslims was recommended and encouraged by Muslim religious specialists, while Christian priests and Jewish rabbis made analogous recommendations to their respective congregations.[11] The millets therefore existed in different quarters of the cities and in separated villages out in the country. The only place where members of the different millets normally came into contact was in the market area.

The millets had two types of local government. Ottoman officials and religious judges adjudicated civil and criminal cases involving Muslim and non-Muslim citizens. Priests and Jews or Christian primates collected taxes and effectively governed at the local level. When the two systems coordinated well, the life of the millet ran smoothly and in peace. When the two systems competed against each other, the result was complexity and abuse. In such an atmosphere of uncertainty, which was endemic during the final two centuries of the Ottoman Empire, people sought security in direct relationships with the individuals in power. With some exceptions, as in the situation mentioned above, the ruling class seldom intervened in the life of the millet and normally only when the millet leaders were unable to assure tax payment or the maintenance of security by their followers.

For the Ottomans religious tolerance was a sound basis for government. For example, in almost all European Christian states until

---

[10] H. Inalcik, 'The status of the Greek Orthodox patriarch under the Ottomans', *Turcica* 21-23, 1991, pp. 408-409.

[11] S. Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the world around it* (London: Tauris & Co, 2004), p. 17.

modern times only one form of religion was accepted – Christianity – and not any form of Christianity but the one officially adopted by the ruling class of the country. Spain persecuted and forced many Muslims, Jews, Gypsies and non-Catholic Christians to migrate. In Catholic France, the state and church persecuted and executed thousands of Albigenses, Cathars, Templars, Huguenots and other Christians because the confession they had was different to the one confessed by the Pope and the king of France. This was obviously not the case and practice in the Ottoman domains. Different Christian denominations and Jewish congregations were freely allowed to practice their religion.

Ottoman religious toleration was not perfect. The Ottoman Empire was, by all accounts, a Muslim state, which is why the autonomy and pluralism of the Millet System did not diminish the superiority of the Muslim religion and the power of the central authorities. Each of the millets 'had the right to deal with religious matters concerning the Church and priesthood, with matters relating to the individual and family such as marriage, divorce, engagements and inheritance. But other matters – notably economic and commercial ones, law and order, and most penalties – were left outside the millets' prerogatives.'[12] Special levies of money and labour were imposed upon the non-Muslim population, and restrictions were placed on personal freedom. In court, the testimony of the Muslim was always more trustworthy than that of the non-Muslim. Marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims was illegal, though a Muslim man could marry a Christian woman. The most hated law of all was the forced conscription of male children into the Ottoman military or civil service. This practice, known as 'devshirme' or 'blood levy', left deep negativity about Muslims in the minds of the Christians who used to live under the conditions of the millet.[13] 'Devshirme' began during the time of Sultan Murad I (1359-1389) and this systematic conversion was undertaken by the state. The strongest Christian male children between the ages of 8 and 18 years were forcibly conscripted. They were converted to Islam and sent to the capital for special education. Most of these children were never seen again by their families. Many of the reports made by western ambassadors and missionaries from the sixteenth century described the cruelty carried out by the state officers during these family separations.[14] Depending on the needs of the state, 'devshirme' was carried out either each year or each third or fifth years. Children have always been the most precious and

---

[12] K. Karpat, *An Inquiry into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State: From Social estate to classes, from millets to nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 36.

[13] For more details about 'devshirme' see: Braude and Lewis, Introduction, in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, p. 15.

[14] A very useful collection of sources and materials related to the topic can be found in: Eugenio Alberi, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato Firenze*, 1840, serie III, vol. I.

valuable possession of the Balkan people. This is the main reason why most of the positive characteristics of the Millet System have been forgotten and only the terrible memory of 'devshirme' has been preserved amongst Christians. The example of Bosnians, who were converted to Islam, shows that for those for whom it was difficult to feed their families they recognised the chance that 'devshirme' offered to their boys. According to a later tradition, Bosnians asked the sultan for the special privilege of continuing to be subject to the 'devshirme', even after their conversion to Islam.[15]

The state gave preference to Muslims in many parts of government and especially in high office. Muslims undoubtedly felt more a part of the state than did Christians. Maintaining large numbers of non-Muslims resulted in the incorporation of almost the entire Muslim population into the mechanisms of power. Every male Muslim was a soldier, and with some exceptions[16] none of the non-Muslims had the right to carry a gun.[17] In fact, most of the uprisings of the Christian population in the Balkans were suppressed in their initial stages by the neighbouring Muslims, and the intervention of the government's army was very seldom necessary.[18] So, as we can see, official state toleration did not mean that prejudice disappeared among the Ottoman Muslims and the people of other millets. Muslims were always the first subjects of the Empire, with far greater rights and responsibilities than non-Muslims. The Ottoman state tolerated non-Muslim subjects, but this certainly did not give them equality with Muslims.

The Millet System was pragmatic and useful. It worked quite smoothly during the first two centuries of the Ottoman rule, but in time war brought about a division of the country into Muslims and non-Muslims which led to tension and oppression. Muslims always had ways to defend their interests. Once the central power lost its control over the periphery of the country, local landlords began to rob their Christian peasants. So, for

---

[15] Majer, 'The functioning of a Multi-ethnic and Multi-religious State', pp. 62-63.

[16] Special categories were given to the Christian population by the government and certain tasks gave the right to carry arms. Derbendjis was a term for people who were used to protect difficult and dangerous mountain districts or woodland. Another Christian military group was the 'armatoliks', armed guardians who, together with Muslim military groups, were used to protect castles in the countryside. See for example: A. Velkov, 'Инье' в османской военной организации, in: *Ислам, Балкан и Великие силе (XIV-XX век)*, Београд: Историйски Институт Сану, 1997, pp. 113-114; M. Kiel, *Art and society of Bulgaria in the Turkish period. A sketch of the economic, juridical and artistic preconditions of Bulgarian post-Byzantine art and its place in the development of the art of the Christian Balkans, 1360/70-1700* (Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1985), pp. 56-120.

[17] An interesting source which deals with the problem is: H. Inalcik, 'The Socio-Political Effects of the Diffusion of Firearms in the Middle East', in: *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East* (ed. M. E. Yapp) (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 195–297.

[18] See for example: З. Стоянов, *Записки по българските въстания* (София: Народна младеж, 1978); П. Мутафчиев, *История на българския народ* (София: Народна просвета, 1943).

example, non-Muslims were allowed to live according to their religion as long as their religious practices did not provoke Muslims. But in the periods of political and economic crisis, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the decline and disintegration of the empire began, local landlords interpreted the principle 'not to provoke Muslims' in different ways. Christians have remembered many stories about monasteries, churches and church properties being sold by local authorities; many of these stories were confirmed by recently discovered Ottoman fiscal documents. The memory is still alive among Balkan Christians of the extraordinary levy imposed by local 'pashas', 'the levy of the blunted teeth'. Each household visited by the local 'pasha' should provide him and his fellows with food, drink and accommodation and should pay 'the levy of the blunted teeth' to the 'pasha' because his teeth were blunted by the hospitality.

However, the proscriptions of Islamic law and millet rules were one thing; the reality of life sometimes was another. It is difficult to answer the question: if the living conditions of both groups, Muslims and non-Muslims were that similar, why did so many people prefer to adopt Islam instead of remaining Christian? Most of the researchers think that the main reason for conversion was economic and financial. 'In fact, only those being or becoming Muslim were able to make use of all the possibilities the Empire offered. Descent played no role. The decisive factors were to be a Muslim, to be able to speak Turkish and to be a capable person.'[19] Everything said about the advantage of being Muslim is right, but 'it is not true that one had to be a Muslim in order to become rich in the Ottoman Empire. There were many successful merchants – Greeks, Vlachs, Armenians – who never abandoned Christianity. But it is true that, after the early sixteenth century at least, it was necessary to be Muslim in order to have a career in the structure of the Ottoman state itself.'[20]

Tension existed not only between Muslims and non-Muslims. Soon after the Millet System was introduced, tension appeared amongst members of the same millet. For example, in the Orthodox millet, Greeks were in a much better position compared to those of their Slav or Arab compatriots, because of the Patriarch of Constantinople who was responsible for the Orthodox millet, the biggest in the Ottoman Empire. With no exceptions, from beginning to end, the patriarchs were Greek in origin. Soon after the establishment of the Orthodox patriarchal institution, the patriarchs began to oppress their non-Greek subjects. All the Slav bishops and most of the town priests were replaced by Greek clergy. Slavonic books were burned

---

[19] Majer, 'The functioning of a Multi-ethnic and Multi-religious State', p. 62.
[20] N. Malcolm, *Bosnia. A short history* (London: Papermac, 1994), p. 52f.

and the main aim of the patriarchs was to erase the Slavs' historical memory.[21] So the Ottoman Empire enabled the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople to fulfil his dream to gain and hold the control of nearly the entire Orthodox world.[22] Even the mightiest Byzantine emperors could not secure this for him.

The notorious treatment of the Slav Christians by the Greek patriarchs caused separation amongst the members of the Orthodox millet.[23] This separation lead, in the nineteenth century, to the division of the Orthodox millet into Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, etc. millets.[24] The same situation can be observed with the Nestorians who were under the control of the head of the Armenian millet.

One should not blame the sultan for the problems which existed inside the millets. As a true Muslim, the sultan's faith came before any ethnic, linguistic or racial difference. Within Islam, the Turkish or Gypsy Muslims have the same dignity as an Arab Muslim. Through the Millet System the sultan introduced this Muslim pattern to the non-Muslim communities, but for various reasons it did not work. For example, the complete freedom given to the Patriarch of Constantinople in administering church affairs was not always used for the benefits of Christianity. Some patriarchs served the Hellenistic idea more than Christ himself. They turned the words of Jesus that there are no more Jews, Greeks or barbarians because in Christ everybody is one, into: in Christ everyone should be Greek.[25] We also have to admit that although the position of the patriarch was firmly established and his rights over the Orthodox population recognised by the sultan and the Porte,[26] the rights and honour given to him were at the mercy of the sultan. The sultan himself was the source of all rights and mercy, so when the patriarch was recognised as being on the same high cultural level as Mohammed II the rights of the patriarch might be observed.[27] For instance, when sultan Selim II was in power, the rights of the patriarch and the millet were reduced to nothing and there was no-

---

[21] N. Zernov, *Eastern Christendom. A study of the origin and development of the Eastern Orthodox Church* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), p. 193.

[22] R. Clogg, ' The Greek Millet in the Ottoman Empire', in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 185.

[23] Ibid., pp. 187-189.

[24] Ibid., pp. 194; T. Koev, 'The Bulgarian patriarchate', in: *Martyria/Mission. The witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (ed. Ion Bria) (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), p. 104.

[25] For more details see: A. Schmemann, *The historical road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (London: Harvill Press, 1963), p. 280; Clogg, 'The Greek Millet in the Ottoman Empire', pp. 185-207.

[26] Porte is the French for 'gate'. In the Ottoman Empire it referred to the Sublime Porte, or gate, in Istanbul used as the place of greeting representatives of foreign governments by the representative of the sultan. Today the word is applied to the Turkish Foreign Ministry.

[27] See for example: B. Braude, 'Foundation Myths of the millet system', in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 74-81.

one to whom they could complain.[28] The fact is that of one hundred and fifty-nine patriarchs during nearly five hundred years of Ottoman rule, only twenty-one died a natural death in office. Six were killed, twenty-seven abdicated, one hundred and five were arbitrarily removed. The sultans could at any moment dismiss the patriarch or any of the bishops who incurred their displeasure. Few were able to exercise their pastoral duties for a long period and in peace.[29] The intervention of the civil power into the life of the Orthodox Church was also one of the characteristics of the pre-Islamic period when the emperor exercised his theocracy, not always for divine purposes.

It is obvious that it is impossible to satisfy the desire for self rule of every single identity group without causing massive dislocations and violence. That is why the only rational alternative is to look for a model of interethnic and multi-faith coexistence.[30] The Ottomans, through the Millet System, managed to find a good model of multi-religious coexistence in their poly-ethnic empire. Under this system, different religious and later ethnic groups enjoyed a wide range of religious and cultural freedoms and considerable administrative, fiscal and legal autonomy. We should not be tempted to compare the rules and canons of the Ottoman empire with the modern concepts about justice, tolerance and human rights. But the multi-religious model of the Ottoman Empire was much more just and advanced compared to that of medieval Europe, even in the seventeenth century.

So Ottoman toleration was not so notable because it was perfect, it was notable because it was far better than what existed elsewhere at that time. Muslims were undoubtedly first class citizens, but there was enough room for the non-Muslims to freely practice their religions and customs. Later, with the awakening of the economic initiative of the Balkan populations, the restriction of Islamic law for non-Muslims became very sensitive. With the Tanzimat reforms, started by sultan Abdulmecid in 1839 and his famous Imperial Edict of Gulhane (Hatt-i-sharif of Gulhane), the old system of differentiation, distinction and of Muslim legal superiority formally disappeared. Equality of status meant more or less equality of obligation and military service for all. The clothing laws, for distinguishing of Muslims from non-Muslims disappeared almost entirely and, while the religious courts remained, many of their functions vanished. That brought into existence new, so-called, mixed courts. At first new courts held commercial, criminal, and then civil cases involving persons of different religious communities. Later, beginning in 1869, secular courts (nizamiye)

---

[28]For further details see: Schmemann, *The historical road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, pp. 273-276.

[29] Zernov, *Eastern Christendom*, p. 135.

[30] For more details see: R. Toscano, 'The face of the other: ethics and intergroup conflict', in: *The handbook of interethnic coexistence* (ed. E. Weiner) (New York: Continuum, 1998), pp. 63-70.

presided over civil and criminal cases involving Muslim and non-Muslim. Whether or not these changes automatically and always improved the rights and status of individuals – Christian, Jew or Muslim – is still debatable and obscure.[31] This new historical reality required changes in the Millet System. During the same nineteenth century, in 1856, the famous document Hatt-i Humayun was published and became the juridical base for these changes.[32] The time of the good old millet principle, grouping people on religious grounds, was over. The process of national awareness had begun and it provoked extra tension amongst the members of the same millet and later became the main factor for the national-liberation movements. The Millet System was replaced by the organisation of communities on an ethnic basis.[33]

These new movements brought to an end the five-hundred year Ottoman Empire and led to the creation of modern Turkey.

Ventzislav Karavaltchev, MPhil, Executive Director of the Institute for Theological Researches 'St. Andrew The First –Called', Kiev, Ukraine
Pavel Pavlov, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Theology, University of Sofia 'St. Clement of Ohrid', Sofia, Bulgaria

---

[31] D. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 178.

[32] S. Khalaf, 'Communal conflict in nineteenth-century Lebanon', in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 123-124.

[33] See for example: В. Китанов, За ролята на общините при формиране на българското отношение към османската власт през епохата на Възраждането. *ИКБИАКОИ – ЮЗУ Благоевград*, 2, 2005, с. 1-9.

Is there a New Perspective on St. Paul's Theology?[1]

Theodor Stoychev

Introduction

When we read the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament and particularly the epistles of St. Paul, we admire the thematic and linguistic variety in Paul's theology. Even St. Peter defines some points of the epistles as difficult to understand so that ignorant and unstable people misrepresent them (2 Peter 3:16).

The questions posed by St. Paul, often called the apostle to the Gentiles, as well as his influence on Christian ideas are indisputable, irrespective of the evaluations and interpretations of different scholars. We can definitely conclude that there are questions of belief which are the centre of his theological system. At the heart of everything that he talks about is the crucified and resurrected God Jesus Christ. This eschatological centre is the basis upon which the apostle built his soteriology.

In the same ideological context he brings up matters such as the connection between the Law and grace. To what extent is Judaism a nomistic religion in which the idea of salvation through God's grace is absent? Is there a developed doctrine about salvation through God's grace in Judaism as presented in the epistles of St. Paul?

In connection with the previous two questions we must also consider the validity of the Law. Can we assert that St. Paul stands against the Old Testament Law and if so, why? The right vision of Judaism helps to resolve some questions in the theology of St. Paul related to the Law and provides a better clarification of his soteriology. In this paper I will consider the nature of the debate in addressing these and similar questions and I will evaluate the importance of the proposed 'new perspective on St. Paul's theology' for reconciling the difficulties in addressing the questions.

The nature of the debate

These questions are rooted in some portions of the epistles. For example: 'yet who knows that a man is not justified by works of the law but through

faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified.' (Gal. 2:16); 'For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.'(Rom. 3:20).

The traditional interpretations of these questions are based on the theory that Paul's theology is radical in relation to Judaism. Judaism is defined as juridical, nomistic, outside of grace and spirit. According to this understanding Jewish people can only be saved by works. A Jew deserves his salvation through obeying God's numerous orders, being obliged to rely on the Law from which he receives life. From this St. Augustine, Martin Luther and western theologians developed an image of Judaism[2] and a definite theological perspective on St. Paul's theology, which passes into a new orthodox theology (I consider here some questions of interpretation of St. Paul's epistles as well as defining an approach to Judaism as a whole). The Protestant influence on nineteenth century Russian Orthodox theology is no secret.[3] Orthodox thinkers from the beginning of the twentieth century are trying to change this course of events. This influence cannot remain unnoticed in Bulgarian theological circles due to relations between the two churches and their theology. Prof. Nikolay Glubokovski, one of the most prominent representatives of New Testament biblical studies in Russia and Bulgaria in the first half of the twentieth century, was at the same time one of the most dedicated followers of this nomistic understanding of Judaism and respectively of the confrontation on the part of St. Paul to that nomism.[4] This idea has been adopted by Prof. G. St. Pashev, who, basing his ideas on Prof. Glubokovski, writes about 'the heartless legality of the rabbinic nomism'.[5] 'According to the Rabbinic schools', he writes, 'the fulfilment of the law and human purity are sufficient for the salvation of the human being'.[6] This image of Judaism is built mainly upon a certain reading of the epistles of St. Paul, or upon some later rabbinic evidence as Prof. Glubokovski does, without being placed in a wider context.

During the last few years scholars such as Franz Mussner, Lloyd Gaston, Markus Barth and John Fisher have tried to set St. Paul free from some accusations of anti-Semitism, while wishing to show that the apostle

---

[2] I find it necessary to underline that the Holy Fathers of Orthodox tradition are also not alien to a similar approach to Judaism. As stemming basically from the epistles of St. Paul, it disregards external evidences.
[3] G. Pashev, *Idejata za spasenieto I nejnata nravstvena strana* [The Idea of Salvation and Its Ethical Side] (Sofia, 1931), pp. 202-203.
[4] N.N. Glubokovski, *Blagovestie svjatogo apostola Pavla po ego proishozhdeniju i sushchnosti* [The Good News of Saint Apostle Paul according to Its Origin and Essence] Vol. I, (St Petersburg, 1905).
[5] Pashev, *Idejata za spasenieto*, p. 248.
[6] Ibid., p. 249.

confirms the covenant privileges of Jews and the continuing validity of the law, even though not for pagans.

E.P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*,[7] which is defined by James Dunn as the only book deserving high evaluation during the last decades, is a turning point in the examination of St. Paul's ideas on these questions.[8] According to Sanders all branches of Judaism from the first century share the conviction that the connection of Israel with God is a fruit of God's blessed activity in the establishment of a covenant with His people. Submission to the Law is an adequate answer to God's grace. Therefore, salvation is not deserved or reached by performance (we cannot speak about merits), but is an act of God's grace. Submission to the Law in Judaism is never regarded as a means for entering the covenant, for gaining this special connection with God; it is a question of maintaining the covenant connection with God. From here Sanders deduces the key phrase by which he defines Palestinian Judaism from the first century as 'covenantal nomism'. He formulates this subsequently: '…covenantal nomism is the view that one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression.'[9] Hence his conclusion is that St. Paul's dispute with Judaism is not about the problem of deeds, but is due to his special soteriology and his desire that pagans be accepted in God's nation. In other places Sanders writes that what is wrong in Judaism is that it is not Christianity.

Another researcher who deserves attention is Heiki Räisänen. Sanders considers that St. Paul does not accuse Judaism of legalism, while Räisänen agrees with the opinion of Luther that the apostle addresses just the same reproach toward Judaism. Räisänen principally agrees with Sanders on the need for re-evaluation of the relationship of Paul to the Judaism of his time. Räisänen, however, makes even more radical claims. His understanding is that St. Paul not only wrongly represents the Judaism of his time, but also distorts it. Räisänen sees a much greater aloofness and radicalism between St. Paul and Judaism than Sanders, and therefore talks about Paul finally breaking away from Judaism.[10]

James Dunn is another representative of this theology of the new perspective on Paul. As Seyoon Kim notes: 'James Dunn definitely is the

---

[7] E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977).
[8] 'The New Perspective on Paul', *BJRL* 65 (1983), p. 97.
[9] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, pp. 75, 420, 544.
[10] Heiki Räisänen, 'Galatians 2.16 and Paul's Break with Judaism', *NTS* 31 (1985), p. 544.

most tireless, yet the most eminent defender of "the new perspective, related with the theology of Paul".'[11] It was he who created the phrase 'New Perspective on Paul', which expresses a new approach in interpretation of St. Paul's epistles, based on Sanders' definition of Judaism from the Second Temple period. Sharing this new attitude toward the apostle's theology, Dunn opposes some of Sander's ideas, 'He [Sanders] quickly, too quickly in my view, concluded that Paul's religion could be understood only as a basically different system from that of his fellow Jews.'[12] What Dunn regards as wrong in traditional Judaism is not the gross legalism but the extreme state of ethnocentrism. According to him the apostle Paul struggles against the 'works of the Law' that appear a barrier, an obstacle for accepting pagans into the Christian family. These 'works of the Law' are ritual practices, which Jews observe, namely: circumcision, observation of the Sabbath, the stipulations against prohibited food and feasts. In this way, as Räisänen notes: 'Dunn thus presents a new version of an old thesis: what Paul attacks is not the law *as such* or as a whole, but just the law as viewed in some particular perspective, a particular attitude to the law, or some specific (mis-) understanding of it'.[13]

This division of law into moral and ritual is criticised by contemporary scholars, including Sanders himself. Dunn's narrow understanding of the concept 'works of the Law' is met with a similar disagreement among scholars as with Sanders' approach.[14]

There are too many authors who have engaged in the study of this topic to include all of them but these three are representative of the new attitude toward St. Paul's theology. Likewise they share one and the same starting point, as Stephen Westerholm notes.[15]

We will not discuss all the problems that each of them deals with but we will view the principal frame of Judaism constructed by these scholars. What we have to underline is that these epistles are set in the real literary-historical context in which they are written. The themes, which the apostle raises, are clarified by works which are not included in the collection of

---

[11] Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: second thoughts on the origin of Paul's gospel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W B Eerdmans, 2002), p. 1.

[12] Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', p. 100.

[13] Räisänen, 'Galatians 2.16 and Paul's Break with Judaism'.

[14] C.E.B. Cranfield, 'The Work of the Law in the Epistle to the Romans', *JSNT* 43 (1991). As the author notes: 'The special care of this article is Dunn's understanding about Paul's usage of the phrase works of the Law', i.e. a criticism of the interpretation, proposed by Dunn in referring to Romans; D.J. Moo, 'Law', 'Work of the Law', and 'Legalism'. WTJ 45 (1983), p. 297; Räisänen, 'Galatians 2.16 and Paul's Break with Judaism', p. 544; Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective*, p. 3; N. Bonneau, 'The Curse of the Law in Gal. 3:10-14', *NT* 39 (1997), pp. 66-68.

[15] Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church: Paul and his recent interpreters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W B Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 141-142.

canonical books. It is clear that there are a vast number of writings which would be hard, almost impossible to examine entirely. Likewise there is the question of literature of different kinds: apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, *tannaim* etc.

With a view to the great scope of source literature and sometimes contradictory information proposed by one and the same work, the discussion of this question is exceedingly difficult. That is why different researchers often draw controversial conclusions from one and the same source. The question is: why does St. Paul so ardently oppose the Law and write many times that no one who observes it will be saved (Gal. 2:16, 3:10-11; Rom. 3:20)? Is this image he created about Judaism adequate? Is it right to speak about a religion which requires complete observation of everything written in the Pentateuch? We cannot even work on many of the details because of the scope of the writings, but we will outline some important questions.

As has been noted, Sanders and others who share his view set the question of obedience to the Law in relation with the election of the Jewish nation. Sanders' argument that entering in the Covenant was entirely an act of God's choice and His grace became so widely circulated that it has become something habitually accepted in studies about Judaism.

If we take note of the apocryphal story of 'Joseph and Aseneth' (*c.* 30 B.C.),[16] we will see revealed the conversion of Aseneth, a daughter of Potipher, a priest of Heliopolis, to Judaism. Her conversion is accompanied with the refusal of idolatry and deep repentance. She confesses God as merciful, long-enduring, who does not take into account the sin of the humble. Because of her repentance she became a part of the Covenant. An angel, sent by God, tells her that her prayer is reckoned before God and her name is recorded in the book of life. Because of her repentance, the angel calls her 'City of Refuge, because in you many nations will take refuge with the Lord God, the Most High, and under your wings many peoples trusting in the Lord God will be sheltered, and behind your walls will be guarded those who attach themselves to the Most High God in the name of repentance' (15:7).[17]

Craig Evans notes that, even though God's grace is praised in 'Joseph and Aseneth', he believes that salvation comes by observance of

---

[16] John Collins writes: '…In this case, date and provenance are quite uncertain, and the textual history is disputed'. (*Between Athens and Jerusalem*: *Jewish identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), pp. 103-104). For more information about the date and provenance, see Ibid., pp. 103-110.

[17] The text and the division are taken from: http://www.aethericenergy.org/joseph.htm.

Torah.[18] John Collins, for his part, expresses uncertainty if it is possible to draw the conclusion that the whole law has to be observed.[19] According to him the Law is reduced to monotheism, rejection of idolatry, chastity before marriage and avoidance of sexual relations with 'outsiders'.[20] 'Divine life … is obtained through the right use of food, ointment, and by the avoidance of the pagan way of partaking of them', C. Burchard underlines.[21] Agreeing with this statement Evans concludes: 'God's grace is the presupposition, to be sure, but apart from wholesale adoption of Jewish food and purity laws, the conversion of Aseneth could not have taken place'.[22] This treatment of the text is contrary to and in contradiction with the aspects of 'covenantal nomism' as Sanders has defined it.[23]

The picture in the work 'The life of Adam and Eve'[24] (the end of the first century AD), is similar. The forgiveness which Adam and Eve receive is not entirely a result of God's mercy; it is an answer to their eager repentance. For them to be resurrected and to receive access to 'the tree of life', Adam has to refrain from any evil ('…but if you resist temptation and endure hostility, which I have put between you and the tempter, then you will enter in paradise, when you die and revive again, I will take you and will allow you to taste the fruits of the Tree of life').[25] After being long in the water of repentance Adam and Eve hope that God will show mercy to them, but there are insufficient instructions that such mercy surely will be given. At the end of their mortal life they are not assured of being reconciled with God: 'Because we do not know how we have to welcome our Creator (this is said by Adam and Eve at their death), will He be angry with us, or will He be merciful and welcome us?'[26] Actually they are not deprived entirely of God's mercy. Even though the unction of mercy is refused to Adam for the present, it is promised at the Resurrection.[27] But

---

[18] 'Scripture-Based Stories in the Pseudepigrapha', in D.A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien and Mark A. Seifrid, (eds.), *Justification and Variegated Nomism*. Vol. I, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (Tubingen: Mohn Siebeck, 2001), p. 65.
[19] Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, p. 234.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Quoted in Evans, 'Scripture-Based Stories', p. 65. This quotation is relevant to two places from the related work 'Joseph and Aseneth' – 8:5 and 15:4: '…and eat blessed bread of life and drink a blessed cup of immortality and anoint himself with blessed ointment of incorruptibility…'. There is a dispute as to how this expression is to be understood. See Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, pp. 232-233.
[22] Evans, 'Scripture-Based Stories', p. 66.
[23] See E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 B.C.E.-66 C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1994), p. 277.
[24] This text and the following quotations are taken from the Latin Version of the 'The life of Adam and Eve', http://apokrif.fullweb.ru.apocryph2/adam_eva_lat.shtml (translated in Russian) accessed on 11 April 2011.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

even this promise for a future mercy is in relation to a perfect way of life.[28] It is evident that life according to God and eternal life go together. Repentance really is the means which gives hope to humanity, but only in the context of God's commands.

In the work 'The Life of the Prophets' (D.R.A. Hare dates this work to around the first quarter of the first century AD) the clearly expressed power of repentance can be seen once again.[29] From these examples it becomes clear that repentance, God's mercy and forgiveness are very important moments in the work – that, of course, does not mean, as Evans notes, that a person can be received by God without observation of the Law.[30]

Of prime importance for our theme is the attitude of Joseph Flavius to the question. As Paul Spilsbury notes,[31] in the works of Flavius we will not find long discussions on questions such as justification or the importance of faith and works of salvation or an at-all-clear image of salvation as a theological category. But, nevertheless, he from time to time throws light on questions which are of interest to us. In his book *Jewish Antiquities* Flavius notes that the greatest good from God is the Law, which He alone has given to Moses. The Law is the instrument of God to rule over His nation. He invokes: the commandments must be kept unaltered, because they contain the welfare of the Jewish nation.[32] In the context of *Jewish Antiquities* he revealed the incorrect understanding about the nature of the Covenant on the part of his compatriots. According to him membership in the nation is not simply a question of physical origin from eminent ancestors deserving of praise.[33] What he shows is, actually, that God's benevolence is based on human piety: 'O, children of Israel! The only way for reaching happiness for all people is the most kind God, because only He is capable to give it to them who are worthy of it, and to deprive it from these who commit a sin before Him. If you address God as He alone desires…, you will not be overtaken by failures…'[34] In his work *Against Apion*, Flavius notes that in some cases Jews were persecuted by tyrants for no other reason than that the people wanted to watch a strange show 'of people who believe that the only evil which can happen to them is to be forced to accomplish any deed or to say a word opposite to their

---

[28] Ibid.
[29] Evans, 'Scripture-Based Stories', p. 69.
[30] Ibid., p. 72.
[31] 'Josephus', in Carson, O'Brien and Seifrid, (eds.), *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, p. 242.
[32] Joseph Flavius, *Iudejskie Drevnosti* [Jewish Antiquities], vol. 1, (Minsk: 1994, in Russian), p. 203.
[33] Ibid., p. 159.
[34] Ibid. pp. 185-186.

commands'.[35] From the context of his work it becomes clear that the connection between God and humankind is based on obedience to the Law. The idea for an eternal covenant outside a special relation with the Law is absent in the works of Flavius.[36]

Recently scholars started to pay greater attention to the Dead Sea Scrolls. Heikki Räisänen notes that people in Qumran, reminiscent of St. Paul, accepted the leading role of God's grace.[37] The same author relies on the Qumran manuscript (1SQ 11:11-15), where God's mercy is unambiguously spoken about: 'As for me, if I stumble, the mercies of God shall be my salvation always, and if I fall in sin of the flesh, in the justice of God, which endures eternally, shall my judgment be…'[38] Salvation depends, as he underlines, entirely on God's grace: '*Only* by your goodness is man acquitted' (1QH 5:23).[39] Even obedience to God is possible thanks to His grace. Human beings are incapable of guiding their own steps, so everything is established by God: 'As for me, in God is my judgment; in his hand is the perfection of my path…' (1QS 11:2).[40] Sanders' statement is similar.

In my view, we cannot neglect these places of Jewish written materials of Paul's time where God's mercy is underlined. But it is not good to keep silent about other texts which propose a different point of view.

Despite the presence of such places, underlining God's beneficial care, we cannot neglect the fact that the Qumran society calls itself 'a home of the Law' (CD 20.10,13; 1 QS 5.2). According to A. Andrew Das the Qumran documents show that in Judaism before 70 B.C. there were texts, which insist on full observation of the Law. He notes the necessity of aspiration for full fulfilment of the Law is a prevailing motif in the whole Qumran literature (1 QS 1.13-17; 1 QS 5.1; 1 QS 5:8…).[41] There are places, he points out, which clearly say that God will judge deeds rigorously. In 4 QPs 8.4-5 it is written: 'Man is examined after his way, everybody is rewarded for his deeds.'[42]

---

[35] Book 2, Section 32, www.khazarzar.skeptik.net/books/index.htm (in Russian) accessed on 11 April 2011.

[36] Ch. VanLandingham, *Judgment, Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), pp. 33-34.

[37] H. Räisänen, 'Paul's and Qumran's Judaism', in Alan J. Avery-Peck, J. Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton, (eds.), *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, Part 5, Volume One: *The Judaism of Qumran. A Systemic Reading of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 179.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., p. 180.

[40] Ibid.

[41] A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), p. 18.

[42] Ibid.

However this does not mean that the Qumran society has to be accused of rough nomism, because there are places, which clearly evidence against such a view. Human sinfulness is underlined with great persuasiveness. 'Man cannot establish his own steps, for to God belong judgment and perfection of way' (1QS 9.10; cf. 1QH 7[=15]:16), 'No one is righteous in your judgment, or innocent at your trial' (QH 17 [=9]:14f.).[43]

4 QMMT also has to be mentioned (Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah 'Some of the instructions of the Law'), as has been noted during the last few years.[44] From C 26, 27 ('We have (indeed) sent you some of the precepts of the Torah according to our decision, for your welfare and the welfare of your people.') and in B 1,2 ('These are some of our rulings […] which are [some of the rulings according to] [the] precepts (of the Torah) in accordance with [our opinion, and]…'), it is evident that the matter in hand is about different rules related to Torah, which after being broken lead to curses written by Moses in Deuteronomy. Here appears the special similarity which exists between MMT and the problem about which the apostle Paul writes.[45] From the perspective of the community the rejection of some laws provokes the curse of the Law. That is why they call the

---

[43] According to Marcus Bockmuehl, the divine characteristics of righteousness and forgiveness are underlined (1 QS 9.10; cf. 1QH 7[=15]:16; QH 17 [=9].14). Exclusively by God's action and by God's righteous character sin can be excused. See M. Bockmueh, '1QS and Salvation at Qumran', in Carson, O'Brien and Seifrid, (eds.), *Justification and Variegated Nomism,* pp. 398- 399. The same author considers that in 1 QS 10-11 is included what can be defined as the Qumran 'doctrine of justification', Ibid., p. 398.

[44] See in this connection the discussion about apostle Paul's theology in Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4: V: Miqsat Ma`ase Ha-Torah*, vol. 10, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert Series (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); M.G. Abegg**, '**4QMMT, Paul, and "Work of the Law",' in Peter Flint, (ed.), *The Bible at Qumran. Text, Shape, and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W B Eerdmans, 2001); N.T. Wright, **'**Paul and Qumran', Biblical Review, vol. 14 (1998); R Deines**, '**The Pharisees Between "Judaism" and "Common Judaism",' in Carson, O'Brien and Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, pp. 443-504; M.P. Fernandez**, '**Redactional Study', *RevQ*, t. 18 (1997)**;** M**.** Bachmann**, '**4QMMT und Galaterbrief**,** MIQSAT MA ´AŚEY HA-TORAH und ERGA NOMOU', ZNW 89 (1998), pp. 91-113; James D.G. Dunn, '4QMMT and Galatians', *New Testament Studies*, vol. 43 (1997), Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, p. 158. There are many other authors, of course, who refer to this manuscript when discussing the problem about 'the covenant nomism'. See M. Winninge, 'The New Testament Reception of Judaism in Second Temple Period', in Morgens Müller and Henrik Tronier, (eds.), *The New Testament as Reception* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 23-31. 4 QMMT (Miqsat Ma`ase Ha-Torah 'Some of the Instructions of the Law') is a polemic text. It consists of 6 manuscripts (4Q394-399, also MSS a-f), all unfinished, found in IV cave of Qumran. Gathered together they build a text of about 130 lines. The date of the document is defined by Qimron and Strugnell between 159-152 B.C., before the government of the high-priest Jonatan (Qimron and Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4*, pp. 118-121, 175). This opinion is shared by other scholars who take into consideration the palaeographic analysis which set the existing manuscripts during the period 50 B.C. - 50 A.D. Stemming from these palaeographic analyses Miguel Perez Fernandez accepts as a date of writing 150 B.C., 'Redaction Study', *Revue de Qumran*, Tome 18 (December 1997).

[45] D. Garlington, 'Role Reversal and Paul's use of Scripture in Galatians 3:10-13', *JSNT*, 65 (1997), pp. 85-121.

receivers to turn toward God with their whole heart and whole soul (C 15, 16). We find a similar passage in (CD 15:8-10): 'They shall recruit him with the oath of the covenant which Moses made with Israel, the covenant to return to the Torah of Moses with all heart and soul, to that which is discovered to be [required to be] done during the whole period of wickedness', as well as (QS 5:7-9) 'Whoever joins the council of the community shall enter the covenant of God in the sight of all those who have pledged themselves. He shall take it upon himself by an oath to return to the Torah of Moses, according to all that has been commanded, with all heart and soul, by all that has been revealed of it to the Zadokite priests, the keepers of the covenant and seekers of His will', which demonstrates that Torah is a fundamental obligation.[46]

There is categorically a reason to say that in this document there exists a connection between an aspiration for righteousness and deeds of the Law 'And this will be counted as a virtuous deed of yours, since you will be doing what is righteous and good in His eyes, for your own welfare and for the welfare of Israel'.[47]

It is possible to give many other examples but these places are sufficient to show an existing inner tension to be uncovered in the texts, as Marcus Bockmuehl correctly observes.[48] On the one hand salvation in Qumran texts is presented as legalistic, but on the other, it is only a gift of God's mercy. Therefore the religion of the Qumran community can be simultaneously less consistent and less variegated than Sanders presents it.[49]

If it is possible to speak about legalism, such a tendency is perceived with more power in works such as 4 Ezdra (from the end of first century B.C.), 2 Baruch (from the end of the first century – beginning of the second century A.D.), 3 Baruch (end of the first century A.D.), 2 Enoch (first century A.D.), or the Covenant of Adam (first or second century A.D.). This apocalyptic literature presents an image of Judaism where God's mercy is not revealed separately from the perfect or at least in its larger part the righteous life. The requirement to observe the Law is complete and entire. In some places the sources even speak about the weighing of a person's deeds on the Day of Judgment.

---

[46] Philip R. Davies, 'The Torah at Qumran', in: J. Neusner, A.J. Avery-Peck, and B. Chilton, *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, Part two (Boston/ Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc. 2001), pp. 24, 25.
[47] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W B Eerdmans, 2000), p. 251; VanLandingham, *Judgment, Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul*, p. 118.
[48] '1QS and Salvation at Qumran', p. 398.
[49] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 320.

From this exposition it becomes evident that the new attitude toward Judaism, and the new vision of the theology of Paul as expressed by the words 'covenantal nomism' or 'new perspective', is not completely adequate. We cannot speak about only one religious system during the time St. Paul was writing. Evidently the proponents of the 'new perspective' exaggerate the importance of the beneficial action of God in the covenantal frame.

The inner tension in the texts before the destruction of the temple is defined in a different way by various contemporary authors. What is new is the rejection of the understanding of Judaism as a rude legalistic system, where God's grace has no place. That became possible thanks to the profound attention to texts written before and after the time of St. Paul, as previously noted.

Does it mean that the apostle forces and distorts the image of Judaism to strengthen his argument? It is as if he had not understood Judaism rightly during his time.[50] It is true that everyone who seeks contradiction will find it. But one thing is clear that in Judaism the Law and its observation are in the centre. Actually 'Judaism knows too much about grace', as Westerholm notes,[51] but we have to underline with Das that 'God's forgiving grace and the strict demand of the law represent two poles of Jewish thought that persisted in logical tension'.[52] The presence of such a tension does not however mean that it is possible to speak about a predominance of grace in Judaism. The question of whether the whole law has to be observed in Judaism cannot be solved unconditionally.

Evidently the writings of the apostle were based on the new reality in which he was living, but especially on his faith in Jesus Christ. His *kerygma*, that is the content of his sermon, has its origin from the Saviour. 'For I would have you know, brethren', writes the apostle, 'that the gospel which was preached by me is not a man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.' (Gal. 1:11-12). This novelty is crucial for him, and the epistle of the apostle to the Gentiles has to be viewed in this perspective. 'But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.' (Gal. 6:14). Probably in his apology and criticism he was led by a definite tendency in Judaism. It was most likely this tendency, with its way of phrasing things,

---

[50] Räisänen writes that the apostle '…misrepresents Judaism by suggesting that, within it, salvation is by works and the Torah plays a role analogous to that of Christ in Paulinism'. See his *Paul and the Law* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 21.
[51] Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church*, p. 169.
[52] Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, p. 44.

was also predominant, and had been used by him, otherwise the writing would not have had any power. When St. Paul writes: 'And the law is not of faith: but, "The man that doeth them shall live in them"'(Gal. 3:12), he by no means abandons the preliminary frame of Judaism. These words are not unique and strange for the times in which he lived. The Saviour also proclaims that the Law, the Pentateuch, gives life. According to Luke 10:25-28 a lawyer, who wanted to test the Lord, said to him: 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? How do you read?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have answered right; do this, and you will live.'

The lawyer's question is a classic Jewish religious question (see also Mark 10:17). The lawyer's answer, provoked by Christ's question, is a summary of the whole law that is attested in many other sources in different ways.[53] About the law as giving life, we find also evidence in CD 3:12-16, 20, and in Tg. Onq. Lev. 18:5. Irrespective of whether the law has to be observed entirely or not,[54] it has to be followed, even strictly, because otherwise the believer will come under the blows of God's curse: 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.'(Gal. 3:10).

The problem of the supporters of the idea of 'covenant nomism' is that they select only those places in the multiple Jewish literatures from the Saviour's time which sustain their proposition. On the other hand some western biblical scholars can be perceived to have the desire to overcome this image of Judaism, as given by Martin Luther, and therefore there is an aspiration for giving new meaning to some of his interpretations connected with St. Paul's epistles. The term 'Lutheran theology' includes interpretations, categories, certain mental images, related to the interpretation of St. Paul, which oppose grace and merit, respectively justification by faith and justification by deeds.[55]

Here it can be said that Luther's understanding is not unique for his and St. Augustine's teaching. For the ancient church it can be said that this was the dominant interpretation of St. Paul's teaching about the Law as

---

[53] See T. Iss. 5:2; 7:6; T. Dan. 5:3; Ep. Arist. 229; Philo, Virt. §§ 51, 95; Spec. Leg. 2 § 63; Abr. § 208 in Craig Evans, 'Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls', in Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, (eds.), *The Scrolls and Scriptures: Qumran fifty years later* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 594.
[54] On this question there is no consensus in the tannaic literature. See Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*, pp. 33-36.
[55] Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Worum gehet es in der Rechtfertigungslehre?* (Wien: Sonderdruck, 1999), p. 107.

requiring full observation. St. John Chrysostom,[56] Theodoret Cyrus,[57] St. Ephrem the Syrian,[58] St. Jerome[59] etc. consider that a Jew has to observe the Law in order not to come under the curse.

Despite that desire, the problem remains as a whole. They are trying to define why the apostle talks so persistently about grace while neglecting the Law to such an extent – 'the deeds of the Law'. But what we find is that both in St. Paul's texts and in the Jewish written evidence from the Second Temple period which we have examined, there is talk both about the necessity of deeds and about God's grace which sustains a man in his frailty. In our Orthodox tradition we unconditionally define St. Paul's epistles as talking not only about God's mercy, but about deeds as well which are necessary for a person's salvation.[60]

Here arises the question: What is the difference between the apostle and Judaism? This difference is not only in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[61] Actually, these events in the Lord's life are the soteriological centre, if we have the right to separate, to dismember the redemptive deed of Christ entirely. But in the apostle's theology there is much greater radicalism, I would say aloofness, with regard to Judaism. The apostle gives new vision not to Judaism, but rather gives a new meaning to its teaching in the light of the new revelation in which the type is revealed (Gal 3:23,24; Rom. 10:4; Heb. 9:9, 10; Heb. 10:1) and the weak become strong (Heb. 7:18, 19). Christ is the new Adam (Rom. 5:19). He is the real high priest (Heb. 5:5-10). Prof. Zhelev writes, in the context of Heb. 3:5-6 and 5:4-5 that the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ over

---

[56] Sv. Ioan Zlatoust, *Talkuvane ne Poslanijata na Sv Apostol Pavel do Galatjani* [St. John Chrysostom, Interpretations of St Paul's messages to the Galatians] (Sofia: Pechatnitsa na Hudozhnitsite, 1941, in Bulgarian), pp. 145, 146.

[57] Blazheniy Feodorit Kirskiy, *Tvorenia* [Blessed Theodoret Cyrus, Works] (Moscow: Polomnik, 2003, in Russian), p. 377.

[58] Sv. Efrem Sirin, *Tvorenija*, vol. 7 [St. Ephrem the Syrian, Works] (Moscow: Otchiy Dom, 1995, in Russian), pp. 164, 165.

[59] Blazheniy Yeronim Stridonskiy, *Tvorenia*, part 15 [St. Jerome, Works] (Kiev, 1900, in Russian), pp. 77-79.

[60] Prof. Gjaurov writes in this connection: 'In these verses (Jakov 2:24) he (St. apostle Paul) points out that for the justification and the salvation of the man not only faith is necessary but good deeds, that between faith and good works there is so close and unbreakable bond as between the main parts in the body'. See Prof Dr Hristo Gjaurov, 'Bjara i Dibri Dela' [Faith and good works] *Godishnik na Duhovnata Akademia* [Annual of the Orthodox Academy, in Bulgarian], vol. IX (XXXV), 1, (1959-1960), p. 27.

[61] Stephen Westerholm writes, sustaining Sanders, that in Judaism and in Paul salvation comes by grace. Nevertheless, writes the author, the statement that 'grace' and 'works' play an identical part in Judaism and Paul remains misleading. When fixing his eyes on Christ's death for people's sins, Paul has reason to make grace too important. See his *Israel's Law and the Church*, pp. 147, 148. If I have understood rightly the main idea of the author, the difference between Christianity and Judaism is the crucifix of the Saviour. That is confirmed by his other statement: 'Paul's convictions on both scores were formulated in the light of the cross of Christ', without missing to underline, that the pagans who had accepted faith in Christ, helped in shaping of Paul's soteriology.' Ibid., p. 169.

Moses and Aaron becomes apparent. The Lord unites in him the service both of Moses and Aaron and thus is placed much higher than them both.[62] The apostle sees in Jesus the new beginning. The allegory of St. Paul cannot be compared to that of Philo. The latter never reached so far in his works as to announce the Law as dead. The problem is that in St. Paul the Law and grace are more remote from each other. The question is why? Why does he declare against the Law?[63] All the criticisms which he addresses to the Law are completely alien to the spirit of the time during which he wrote. The whole of Jewish literature is far from such a negativism, or to be more precise – from such negative statements. Really, both in Judaism and in St. Paul deeds (observation of definite rules) and the grace (mercy) of God are clearly expressed categories. Both in the apostle and in Judaism the covenant is clearly underlined. Repentance is an important part of the religious life of the Judean, as we find in St. Paul ('Or do you presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?'(Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 6:6)) and in a broader context in the whole orthodox tradition. Therefore it is exceedingly strange when Sanders claims that in St. Paul the idea of repentance is missing. According to him, 'In Paul, on the other hand, absence of one of the essential motifs of the Jewish pattern (according to Sanders that is repentance) is a clue to change in the overall pattern'.[64]

The truth is that St. Paul does have enough negative statements concerning the Law. Not because the Law is bad by nature, but because it does not lead to God's *pleroma*. The Law is the shadow of future blessings (Heb. 10:1), it cannot lead someone to perfection. In Christ however this shortage completes itself as perfection: '… but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever' (Heb. 7:28). The Law leads to Christ (Gal. 3:24). This is reflected in all

---

[62] Ivan Zhelev Dimitrov, 'Gospod Iisus Hristos-Edinstven Novozaveten Pastirenachalnik and Parvosveshtenik' [The Lord Jesus Christ – the only new testament Pastor-head and High Priest] *Godishnik na Duhovnata Akademia* [Annual of the Orthodox Academy, in Bulgarian], vol. XXIX (LV), 3, (1979/1980), p. 188.
[63] According to Klyne Snodgrass, St. Paul demanded that Christians observe the Law, except circumcision and some other rules. According to him the apostle does not break with Judaism. The apostle does not speak about a transition from Judaism to Christianity, though discontinuity does not have to be minimised. Therefore for him acceptance of continuity and discontinuity will help with understanding St. Paul. He proposes a holistic approach for the solution of the difficulty. See his 'Spheres of Influence a Possible Solution to the Problem of Paul and the Law', *JSNT*, 32 (1988), pp. 96-97.
[64] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 546. Romano Penna also writes that the idea about repentance is slightly affected by Paul (*Paul the Apostle: Wisdom and Folly of the Cross,* vol. 2 (Collegeville, Minnesota: A Michael Glazier Book, 1996)), p. 69.

Christian traditions. The prophets are respected because they proclaimed the coming of the Righteous.[65]

In the same way, Christian tradition looks at the Law – not as something alien to grace, but as something that does not necessarily lead to completeness. For that reason St. Nikolai Serbian writes that the law which was given by Adam, Noah and Moses and the other prophets is similar to the sunlight reflected by the moon and stars. But when love's Sun in its full completeness was enthroned, the Law does not shine anymore, because it is not necessary.

All the attempts to find a solution to the contradictory verses referring to the law in the apostle's epistles will remain unsatisfactory unless the problem is viewed through the eyes of Christianity. The truth is that there is a great ideological difference between Judaism and Christianity. I think that it is very hard to see St. Paul's theology through this diversity of texts from the Second Temple period and this is only normal. This study shows that the available texts can be used by one or another group of theologians depending on their ideological attitude. If any incidental observer reads different texts which are normative for the Orthodox Church, he would think that Orthodoxy is merely an extension of Judaism. Texts can be found appealing to Christians to maintain a strict observation of the Ten Commandments and one has to say that they prevail. St. Anthony the Great, while thinking about the necessity of spiritual purification of the soul, writes: 'And if she (the soul) abides firm in her transformation and in voluntary obedience to the Holy Spirit, who teaches her in repentance, then the merciful Creator takes pity on her because of her works, filled with every discomfort and necessity – in prolonged fasts, frequent vigils, in lecturing by God's word... – if she abides firmly in all this, then the Almighty God will look mercifully on her for everything...'[66] When thinking about God's justice, St. Ephrem the Syrian writes: 'Because everyone will bring his works and words in front of the throne of the just Judge... who will not be terrified? Who will not cry? Who will not shed tears? Because there everything will be revealed, which every of us has committed secretly and in the darkness…because he is tolerant and calls every one of us in his kingdom. But he will demand an

---

[65] This opinion can be found in St. Ignatius of Antioch in his epistle to the Philadelphians. See *Svetootchesko Nasledstvo. Izbornik* [The Heritage of the Holy Fathers. Selected] (Sofia: I K Omofor, 2001, in Bulgarian), p. 41. According to St. Apostle Barnabas the divine prophets lived for Christ for which they suffered persecution.

[66] Sv. Antoni Veliki 'Nastavlenia' [St. Anthony the Great, Instructions], in *Dobrotoljubie* [Philokalia], vol. 1 (Holy Mountain Aton, Greece: Georgy Zograf Monastery, 2000, in Bulgarian), pp. 37-38.

answer from us for our negligence in that short time…'[67] St. Theodor of Studium writes: 'But blessed is whoever has lived virtuously, because he has successfully completed his trade, has gained eternal profit and by zeal and fervency has gained the best. But while the market is still open and the change of the heavenly kingdom is still in store, then come, please, fathers and brothers, let's all be vigilant and sober and hurry to buy heavenly and imperishable blessings…'[68] If we look at the noted words of St. Theodor of Studium and remove them from the context of all he has written, we can easily accuse him even of outright legalism.

If we look at these fragments outside the context of Orthodox thought, we can conclude that early Christianity and Orthodoxy do not differ essentially from Judaism during the time of Jesus Christ, and only changes the paradigm, so that the Law is replaced by Christ. A similar conclusion will be drawn only if the eastern and western perspectives are united. The teaching of St. Augustine and the Orthodox tradition concerning the Fall are founded on different bases. According to the first, as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve human nature receives 'full damage' and humankind is incapable of searching for God without His beneficial support.[69] The Orthodox Church, having a different view, maintains that the Fall did not destroy God's image in humanity. Human beings have kept their capability to search for God, even though their freedom has been impaired.[70] The frequent insistence included in the ascetic literature – to persevere in the good – finds meaning in the capacity of humankind for *theosis*, i.e. in our free will,[71] as in our godlikeness.[72] There is no reason to speak about autonomy. The human being can in no way attain *theosis*

---

[67] Sv. Efrem Sirin, *Tvorenija*, vol. 1 [St. Ephrem the Syrian, Works] (Holy Mountains, Athon, Greece: Sv. Vmch. Georgi Zograf, 2002, in Bulgarian), pp. 519-520.

[68] St. Teodor Studit, *Dobrotoljubie* [St. Theodor of Studium, Philokalia], vol. 4, p. 599.

[69] Marijan Stojadinov, *Bozhija Blagodat* [God's blessing] (Sofia: I K Omofor, 2007, in Bulgarian), p. 185.

[70] G. W. Lampe, 'Christian Theology in the Patristic Period', in H. Cunliffe-Jones, (ed.), *A History of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1978), p 157.

[71] St. Ephrem the Syrian writes that God's providence '… in spiritual growth has conceded to the man's free will the labour, the exploit and the ardent and with firm patience procession to this purpose' (he has in mind the reaching of full spiritual maturity) (Sv. Efrem Sirin, 'Obshto opisanie na zhivota na posvetilite se na Boga i na izvarshvaneto na svoeto spasenie' [General description of the life of those who devote themselves to God and reach salvation], in *Dobrotoljubie* [Philokalia], vol. 2, p. 375. These words of St. Ephrem the Syrian show the capacity and the necessity of choice, which leads to God.

[72] Paul Evdokimov writes that 'the invisible optimism of orthodox spirituality springs from the understanding about God's image in man…Thanks to the image man keeps the initial freedom of choice…' (Pavel Evdokimov, *Pravoslavieto* [Orthodoxy] (Sofia: I K Omofor, 2006, in Bulgarian), p. 134. From these thoughts of the famous orthodox theologian the connection which exists between image, grace, freedom and deifying becomes clear. And this is like that, because the image in Eastern Orthodoxy is thought of not as something static, but like 'participation in God's nature'. Ioan Majendorf, *Iisus Hristis v vostochnom pravoslavnom bogoslovii* [John Meyendorff, Christ in the Easter Christian Thought] (Moscow: Pravoslavniy Svjato-Tihonovskiy Bogoslovskiy Institut, Publisher, 2000), p. 125.

without God's grace,[73] without the participation of God. The participation of God was already established at the point of the creation of humanity. The image carries in it the presence of grace[74] and therefore it defines *theosis* (deifying),[75] because it is unthinkable without participation. For Orthodox spirituality, confrontation between freedom and grace is unthinkable. On the contrary, the person finds her or his meaning in God and is supported by Him. That becomes clear in the statement of an unknown author, known as Macarius the Great, that if human nature is left alone in its nakedness and does not take advantage of its association with celestial nature, it will never succeed in any good.[76] According to the words of St. Macarius the Great, only God can banish the sin and evil that lives in humankind.[77] God helps the human being when the person really makes an effort. Without personal exploits or desire on the person's behalf to attain what was lost by the actions of Adam and Eve, one cannot expect salvation and spiritual alteration at all.[78]

When we speak about synergy between God and humankind, that does not mean the Orthodox Church rejects salvation by grace or it has to be accused of pelagianism. People are incapable of changing themselves alone. 'Loneliness' is suicide. St. John Kassian writes very well on this question: 'We always have to be firmly sure of the impossibility of reaching perfection only by our efforts and exploits, even when we practice every virtue tirelessly. Human efforts taken alone do not have the power to raise up to sanctity and bliss if God alone does not minister and lead our heart to what is useful for us.'[79] Therefore the virtue is not ours but God's, who precedes everything: 'Therefore we believe', writes the same saint, 'that as the beginning of good a predisposition is set in us by God's suggestion, so the accomplishment of virtue is given again by Him; but our deed is in this – by our greater or lesser readiness to obey God's suggestion

---

[73] In this connection archimandrite Ierotei Vlahos writes: 'When we speak about purifying, enlightenment and deifying in orthodox spirituality, we have in mind not any stages in anthropocentric endeavours, but a result from the activities of the unearthly energy of God.' (*Pravoslavnata Duhovnost* [Orthodox Spirituality] (Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria: Praksis, 2005), p. 44.

[74] Evdokimov, *Pravoslavieto*, p. 108.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Majendorf, *Iisus Hristis v vostochnom pravoslavnom bogoslovii*, p. 126.

[77] S.M. Zarin *Asketism po pravoslavno-hristijanskomu ucheniju* [Asceticism in the Orthodox-Christian Thought] (Moscow: Pravoslavniy Palomnik Publisher, 1996), p. 89.

[78] Ibid., pp. 89-96.

[79] Sv Ioan Kasian Rimljanin, 'Opisanieto na duhovnata borba' [The Description of the Spiritual Battle], in *Dobrotoljubie* [Philokalia], vol. 2, p. 130.

and accept His help.'[80] For Orthodox theology, virtues are not the purpose but the means or more precisely outer manifestations of Christian life.[81]

All these arguments of the holy fathers draw life from the person of Jesus Christ. Without God's incarnation we cannot speak about deification. St. Irenaeus of Lyon writes: 'The Son of God became the Son of Man in order that man might become a son of God'. This is the main theme in all early theology. 'The whole history of the Christological dogma is defined by that fundamental understanding: the Incarnation of the Word as Redemption.'[82] A blessing, which transforms and leads humanity into God's completeness, springs from the whole soteriological work of Jesus Christ. The Law did not have such power. Only God's kenosis united heaven and earth in fullness.

Many arguments can be adduced that would reveal Orthodox teaching about the connection between works and grace, and also the concept that humanity finds the full possibility of reaching perfection only by the coming of Jesus Christ. That is clear in eastern Orthodox Christology and ecclesiology, as also in Orthodox sacramental theology. All this briefly can be defined as a life in Christ.

But in order not to stray from the main theme I will only use one more fragment of '*226 chapters for those who think to justify themselves by works*', written by St. Marcus Spodvijnik: 'God in His desire to show that although every command is compulsory for everyone, adoption is bestowed to people only by His blood, says: when you observe everything that is ordered to you, say – we are worthless servants because we accomplished what we were obliged to accomplish (Luke 17:10). Therefore the Kingdom of God is not a reward for works, but God's grace, which is prepared for (His) faithful slaves'.[83]

A number of questions have been left unresolved or rather they have been resolved only partially. Who are the Judaisers against whom St. Paul declares in his epistles? Are they a separate and extreme group in Judaism which had insisted on stricter observation of the Law? Or is the point about a dominant tendency, as Roland Deines writes about the Pharisees, for

---

[80] Ibid., p. 131.
[81] Vladimir Loskiy, *Misticheskoto Bogoslovie na Iztochnata Tsarkva: Dogmatichno Bogoslovie* [The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church] (Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria: Slovo Publishers, 1993, in Bulgarian), p. 106.
[82] Georgiy Florovskiy, *Tvorenie i izkuplenie* [Creation and Redemption] (Sofia: Sofia University St Klimen of Ohrid Publisher, 2008, in Bulgarian), p. 100.
[83] Sv Mark Spodvizhnik, Dobrotoljubie [Philokalia], vol.1, p. 532.

example.[84] The question about 'works of the Law' is also not easy to resolve. Does the apostle declare himself against the whole law or only against ritual observation of the law? My opinion is on the side of those who see a rupture with the whole law in the apostle's epistle.

In my view the arguments presented show evidence that despite the places which speak about the special beneficial care of God for his people, the law and in particular the weight of the commands continue to be normative in Judaism.

Conclusion

In an examination of St. Paul's epistles I consider it appropriate to look for a development in the understanding of his message, which begins with the New Testament texts and goes all the way to the writings of the holy fathers or, rather, finds in them its full revelation, as far as permitted by the very holy fathers' writings. The latter are, in my view, neglected in an examination of Paul's epistles. Protestant theologians continue to stick mainly to the text of the Bible. Of course, the apostle Paul's point of view is reflected in the holy fathers' writings and we look for it, at least as far as there is a question about Paul's theology. The sources outside the Bible are always important and helpful, but they cannot be the only base on which one can build one's argument. The novelty, where the apostle of the Gentiles leads us, is obvious, and it is a fruit of his Christological paradigm. Unfortunately we are always tempted to force the time, to return thousands of years backwards and to judge all questions.

In conclusion we must admit the complexity of the topic under consideration here. One-sided engagement with the sources will not bring a satisfactory balance in addressing the complex relationship of the themes of grace and law in Pauline writings. Rather, such engagement reveals more of the author's presuppositions than of the nature of the debate. Using only sources outside the scriptures is insufficient. Limiting the debate to the text of scripture alone is also unsatisfactory. In my view the major problem of the proponents of the new perspective on St. Paul's theology is precisely in the one-sided and sometime biased use of the primary sources. In the same cluster of primary sources one may find seemingly contradictory passages. The sources as a whole do not support Sanders' thesis. He does not take sufficiently into account that Judaism of the Second Temple period is not preoccupied so much with the theme of the Covenant as it is with some

---

[84] R Deines, 'The Pharisees between "Judaism" and "Common Judaism",' in Carson, O'Brien and Seifrid, (eds.), *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, p. 501.

secondary issues of interpretation of the Law. This may be considered as a particular form of nominalism.[85] The New Testament writings also witness to such an understanding of that period. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk. 18:9-14) it is clear that the Pharisee consider that he is righteous due to the strict observance of the precepts of the Law.

In St. Paul one may also discover differing evaluations of the Law. In one place he writes that 'the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good' (Rom 7:12). In another place he states: 'The law was added so that the trespasses may increase' (Rom 5:20). This apparent discrepancy is not an indication of the author's inconsistent thought pattern. For St. Paul, Jesus Christ is the *pleroma*, the fullness that cannot be achieved through the observance of the commandments alone. Therefore he amalgamates his previous thought saying: 'for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on the stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?' (2 Cor. 3:6-8). The image of the Saviour is the one that captures the attention of the Apostle to the nations. He considers the Law incomplete in comparison to the Saviour and therefore not necessary for Christians anymore.

It is for this reason that respect of the Old Testament Scriptures is fully preserved in the Orthodox Tradition as prophetic foreseeing of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church took on a Christological reading of the Old Testament from the earliest times. The person of the Lord is the fundamental hermeneutical key to the scriptures. Accordingly it is important that the New Testament writings are read not only contextually but also ecclesiastically. Only then can one come to terms with the theology of Paul who emphasises Christ instead of the Law in his epistles.

Theodor Stoychev, PhD, Faculty of Theology, University of Sofia 'St. Clement of Ohrid' and parish priest of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Varna, Bulgaria

---

[85] T.R. Schreiner, 'Zakonat' [The Law], in Nov Biblejski Rechnik [New Bible Dictionary] (Sofia: Nov Chovek Publisher, 2007, in Bulgarian).

Book Review

Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context

Glen H.Stassen and David P. Gushee

(In Bulgarian, *Etika na Tsarstvoto*, Nov Chovek Publisher 2010, translated from English by Elena Simeonova, originally published in 2003 by InterVarsity Press in Downers Grove USA), 542 pp.

Translated into more than a dozen languages, *Kingdom Ethics* has already achieved the status of the standard textbook on Christian ethics in evangelical colleges world-wide. Now it is available in Bulgarian encouraging the Christian communities there (and in the neighbouring Slavic speaking countries) to centre Christian moral discourse on the core message of Jesus the Christ for justice, peace and reconciliation and to find realistic ways of addressing contemporary moral challenges. This book is an intellectual feast for those tired of the pragmatic utilitarian or detached Kantian ersatz-ethics. Glen Stassen and David Gushee's magnum opus convincingly argues that we can and, in fact, we should live an unapologetically robust Christian moral life. Based squarely on Jesus' gospel admonitions and taking the lead from his ethical vision outlined in the Sermon on the Mount, this book (and its sequel *Living the Sermon on the Mount* by Jossey-Bass, 2006) provides a wealth of insights into how to do that in practice.

This book did not come easily. It is witness to an intellectual integrity and academic responsibility. It is a product of hard labour and meticulous verification of its major claims in a multitude of academic, denominational and cultural contexts. The authors' faithfulness to the soundness, clarity and applicability of their arguments is exemplary. It is not surprising that the list of reviewers, from almost all major theological perspectives and Christian families, which now includes Orthodox moral theologians, is impressive.

The publication of this book in Bulgarian was chosen to mark twenty years of publication activity of the Publisher. For me, as the theological editor of the book, it was a privilege to work with the highly professional team of 'Nov Chovek' publishing house. I am impressed by the work on translating, editing and publishing of this book, as well as the efforts to make it easily assessable to Bulgarian readers.

Parush R Parushev
Academic Dean and Pro Rector, IBTS

IBTS Directors' Conference
30 January – 3 February 2012

Despise not the Counsel of the Poor:
Convictions on Religious Freedom, the Power of States and the State of the Powers

1612 marks the 400th anniversary of the first publication of Thomas Helwys' book *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, often cited as the first publication to address issues of religious freedom.

To celebrate this the Thomas Helwys Centre for Religious Freedom is holding a conference from 30 January to 3 February 2012 at IBTS in Prague. The provisional title of our conference comes from Helwys' dedicatory handwritten note to the King, where he calls on the King to allow freedom of conscience for all his subjects. Since then freedom of religion has been a key Baptist conviction.

In the conference questions will be addressed, such as:

- What does this conviction mean today and what are the theological grounds for it?

- How are we called to witness to the State, and what practical and theological tools do we have to help us?

- What are the practical and theological threats to religious freedom today?

- What are the implications for the life and mission of the church today of a commitment to religious freedom?

- Is this an ultimate freedom and if not, what are its limits?

We welcome submissions for papers on the theme of this conference. Please contact, in the first instance, Dr Tim Noble, co-director of the Thomas Helwys Centre on tnoble@ibts.eu